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The Role of Indulgences in the Building of New Saint Peter's Basilica

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**The Role of Indulgences
in the Building of
New Saint Peter's Basilica**

*A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Liberal Studies*

By

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May 2011

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Master of Liberal Studies Program*

Winter Park, Florida

This is dedicated to my father
Gerald Paul Pulley
October 25, 1922 – March 31, 2011



As we sped along the roads and byways of Italy heading toward Rome in 2003, my father said to me countless times, “Ginny, you are going to LOVE St. Peter’s Basilica! There is nothing else like it.” He was so right. Thank you for a lifetime of great road trips and beautiful memories, Dad.

Until we meet again...



And when at length we stood in front with the majestic Colonnades sweeping around, the fountains on each side sending up their showers of silvery spray, the mighty Obelisk of Egyptian granite piercing the skies, and beyond the great façade and the Dome,—I confessed my unmingled admiration. The awe I felt did not humble me. On the contrary, I felt exalted. Beings in the form I wore planned that glorious edifice, and it seemed that in God-like power and perseverance they were indeed but little lower than the Angels. I felt that, if fallen, my race was still mighty and immortal.

Bayard Taylor (1825-1878)
when he visited St. Peter's in 1845.
From *Views Afoot*.



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Introduction

In 1506, Pope Julius II laid the cornerstone for New St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Eighty-eight years later, Pope Clement VIII consecrated the grand church. The papal basilica, built to inspire the faithful, was a symbol, the greatest sermon of all time set in stone, for Christians everywhere.¹ A journey to Rome and St. Peter's was a momentous pilgrimage many citizens made in their lifetimes. What was to become the Church's greatest structural achievement of all time, however, was marred by scandal, schism, and upheaval. The popes and their minions connived and stole to get much of the money to build the basilica. Indulgences were sold and empty promises made, frequently to poor, naïve villagers throughout Europe. In the end, the Church owned what is arguably the most magnificent structure ever built. The cost, however, went beyond merely the vast sums spent building it: the abuse of the sale of indulgences caused the faithful to leave the Church in droves. The avarice of the popes resulted in an uprising, led by Martin Luther, who unintentionally began the Reformation and the formation of the Protestant Church. The Reformation cost the Catholic Church countless members, most of whom never returned. Was building New St. Peter's worth the avarice and corruption that accompanied its progress? Ultimately, it was. While it would take over a century to complete, the building of New St. Peter's basilica withstood corruption, wars, the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, good popes and evil ones, and inched its way toward completion in 1626. To this day, the basilica inspires thousands of Christians who come to view its splendor and rejuvenate their faith. In addition, its artwork is unsurpassed, making it a pilgrimage even for non-believers.

¹ Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 139.

Building New St. Peter's gave the papacy a focal point to attract the faithful, making Rome and St. Peter's the center of the Christian world and, ultimately, kept the faith alive. The project brought together some of the world's greatest minds and talent, including Michelangelo, Bramante, Bernini, and Raphael. They worked in concert, along with many others, toward a common goal: creating the most spectacular and inspiring religious site of all time. While its development spanned 120 years, 28 popes, and dozens of chief architects and artists, this work will focus on the period from Nicholas V (Parentucelli, r. 1447-1455) to the death of Michelangelo in 1564, chief architect of St. Peter's at the time.

During the early years in its construction, the papacy was fraught with corruption and greed, disenfranchising followers who recognized the propagandizing and avarice in Rome. Part of the popes' voracious pursuit of money dealt with indulgence sales, and when they were exploited abusively, an Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, posted his *Ninety-five Theses* (1517) on the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. The revolution that followed, the Reformation, brought attention to the corruption in Rome, leading ultimately to the Counter Reformation and Church reform. While many Europeans turned to the new Protestant church, New St. Peter's became a beacon to those who chose to stay with the Catholic church. It became everything Nicholas V envisioned in 1447 when he condemned the original basilica of St. Peter and began building the new one.

Chapter One: The Early Christian Basilica of Saint Peter

To have a full appreciation of the current basilica, it is important to know something of its predecessor, including why it was built and by whom, and what remains of the original shrine in the current basilica. From the years 54 to 68 C.E., the emperor Nero, well known for his persecution of Christians, ruled Rome.¹ During Nero's reign, Peter was crucified, upside-down, in the Circus of Caligula (also sometimes called the Circus of Nero).² Near the location of his death, a *tropaia*, or trophy monument, was made on Vatican Hill near the Tiber River.³ According to Eusebius, a late third-century Christian scholar considered the Father of Church History, textual proof was provided by Gaius, a Roman priest from early in the third century, verifying that the monument included the bones of Peter, or at least some part of Peter worthy of enshrinement.⁴ Peter's body would have been thrown outside the circus walls along with others who were murdered, and it is plausible that other Christians would have recovered his body and given it a proper burial. The details of exactly how the monument came to be are not available, however most Roman Christians of that time believed the monument to be the burial place of St. Peter and an *aedicula*, or "little building," was erected around the monument.⁵

¹ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 20.

² Johann Peter Kirsch, "St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 11. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. 22 Apr. 2011 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11744a.htm>>.

³ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's*, 72.

⁴ Eusebius was the author of the fourth-century work, *Historia Ecclesiastica* Tronzo, *St. Peter's in the Vatican*, 6.

⁵ William Tronzo, *St. Peter's in the Vatican* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 7.

In addition to the *aedicula*, there was a piazza that held about thirty or forty people.⁶ This complex was located in a cemetery near the Circus of Caligula:

The odd placement within the cemetery implied that not only was this a shrine, but one that had to be fitted into that place and no other. In other words, this must have been considered the precise location of a very special tomb. As the first basilica of Peter was awkwardly but deliberately positioned to incorporate this shrine in the most prominent spot in the church, we must assume that already in the second century Christians believed, rightly or wrongly, that this was the tomb of Peter.⁷

The monument dates back to the second century, as evidenced by information found on a drain running alongside the wall of the structure.⁸ The drain had tiles marked 160 A.D., verifying the date of the monument.⁹ That monument would be the mark of St. Peter's tomb until the early fourth century, when Emperor Constantine arrived in Rome:

The most momentous change in the whole history of the Christian Church was brought about by one man, astonishingly enough himself an emperor, Constantine the Great. In the year 306 Constantine, on the death of his father, was proclaimed Augustus by his troops while serving in York in distant Britain. In 312 he succeeded in establishing himself on the throne. The story of his march on Rome is one of the most notable traditions in Christian annals. While crossing the Alps to join issue with Maxentius, the imperial rival standing in his way, Constantine was confronted by a vision of the cross over the midday sun. At the same moment he clearly heard the encouraging words, 'Conquer by this!' The next day he had his standard marked with a monogram, representing the first two Greek letters of Christ's name, Chi and Rho, the symbol that goes by the name 'Iabarum'. Thus fortified by the divine will and protected, as he believed, by a miraculous sign, he marched towards the capital. At the famous battle of the Milvian Bridge over the Tiber he destroyed Maxentius, thus becoming undisputed master of Rome and the West.¹⁰

⁶ William Tronzo, *St. Peter's in the Vatican* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Much information became available in the mid 1900's when archeologists excavated the necropolis under the high altar and under the catacombs of new St. Peter's basilica. William Tronzo, *St. Peter's in the Vatican*, 7.

⁹ Tronzo, *St. Peter's in the Vatican*, 7

¹⁰ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 56.

Constantine made the decision to build a great shrine over the monument for the growing number of Christians now in Rome. He named the shrine the Basilica of St. Peter, and Pope St. Sylvester consecrated it in 326 A.D.¹¹

The original basilica, built in the fourth century, remained in place well over 1,200 years, far longer than the current, or “new,” St. Peter’s. The common belief is that the high altars of St. Peter’s—old and new—was erected directly over the tomb of St. Peter the Apostle himself, the first pope of the Holy Catholic Church and the person upon whom Jesus said he would “build his church.”¹² Much circumstantial evidence exists to support this theory, or to espouse the belief that if not the bones of St. Peter, at least a shrine made in his honor upon his death around 67 C.E. The original, or “old,” St. Peter’s basilica rose quickly, erected within a matter of months.¹³ It was constructed with equal parts of stone and timber and was about three-quarters the size of the current basilica. The church itself was 212’ by 395’ and was one of the largest basilicas built to date.¹⁴ Constantine was determined, based on his vision and victory, to advance the Christian cause and end the persecution of Christians.¹⁵ According to author R.A. Scotti, Constantine “made Christianity respectable and built a basilica to honor Simon Peter, Christ’s first apostle and first pope. Taking up a shovel, the emperor broke the ground himself, filling twelve bags with soil, one for each of Christ’s apostles.”¹⁶

¹¹ Old St. Peter’s Basilica is the name now used when discussing the original St. Peter’s.

¹² Matthew 16:18 [New International Version]. A reference to Jesus’ words, “And I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” The greek word for Peter means “rock.”

¹³ Augustin McNally, *St. Peter's on the Vatican: The First Complete Account In Our English Tongue Of Its Origins And Reconstruction* [New York: Strand Press, 1939], 103.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 56.

¹⁶ R. A. Scotti, *Basilica The Splendor and Scandal: Building St. Peter's* [New York, Penguin Group, 2007], 15.

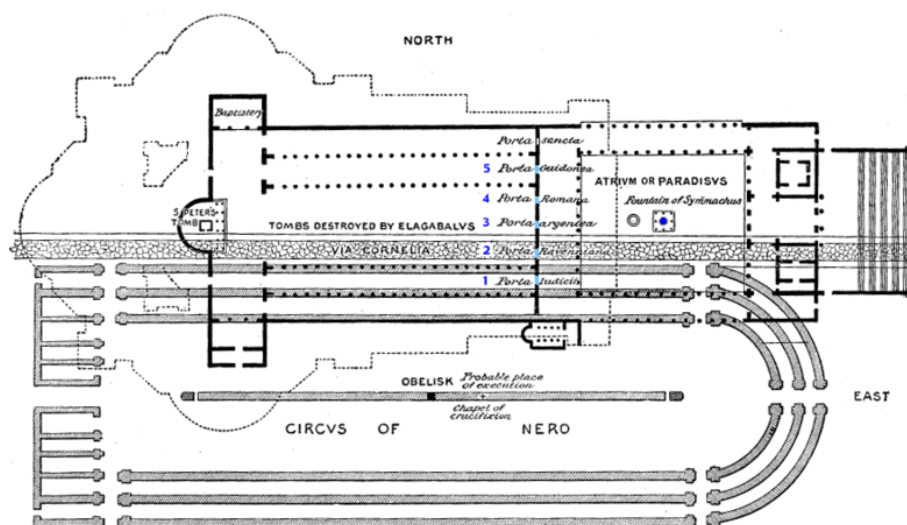


Figure 1: Plan of Old St. Peter's, showing its relation to the Circus of Nero. The cross on the spina marks, theoretically, the probable place of execution of St. Peter, the Chapel of the Crucifixion.

Constantine, following his vision and conversion to Christianity, built several basilicas, most over the burial sites of saints. According to architectural historian James Lees-Milne:

There was no church architecture before Constantine's day, even if some private houses were used more or less exclusively for worship, and had been given decoration of a religious character. With Constantine all was changed. There was no longer any need for the worshippers of Christ to assemble behind closed doors. Christianity was adopted as the state religion and came into the open. Artists appeared whose talents were in sudden demand. The emperor's churches glowed with rich decoration and treasure.¹⁷

Beginning with Constantine and continuing for centuries, the church was the center of public life. It presented itself “as the harbor of refuge from the storms of the world, as the image of the city of God, whose walls were a sure defense. While all else was unstable and changeful, the Church, with her unbroken tradition and her uninterrupted services, vindicated the principle of order and the moral continuity of the race.”¹⁸ Over the next

¹⁷ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 64.

¹⁸ Charles Eliot Norton, *Historical Studies of Church-Building in the Middle Ages* [New York: Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square, 1880], 14.

thousand years, the faithful clung to old St. Peter's. Time and again it was condemned as rotting away and desperately in need of major repair, if not replacement. But because of the great love Catholics held for St. Peter's shrine, popes continued to repair it over and over again until just about every inch had been restored at least once.¹⁹

Between 1303 and 1305, "Pope Benedict XI spent half a million dollars to repair the worn out basilica," only to have the papacy move to Avignon, France for the next 68 years.²⁰ When the papacy returned to Rome, lack of care and maintenance had left the basilica in terrible disrepair. Between the Western Schism and the Avignon Papacy, much of Rome had been neglected and needed rebuilding. By the mid-1400's, the great edifice was condemned again, but this time the Church had a pope in favor of building a new temple, Pope Nicholas V.²¹

Nicholas V was the first pontiff to make Rome his permanent residence after the exile in Avignon and the Schism of the West. As a proponent of the humanist movement, he was also the first to recognize the importance of modernizing the basilica for both structural reasons and to revive the Church.²² To Nicholas V, a new St. Peter's would reinvigorate the Church by inspiring the faithful and serving as a pilgrimage site for Christians throughout the Europe. In 1447, Pope Nicholas V went against the will of the people and made the decision to condemn the original St. Peter's. Much of what remained of the old church was at least 1,200 years old. Some of the spolian supports used in the original shrine came from the walls of Nero's Stadium and were about 1,500 years old.²³

¹⁹ Augustin McNally, *St. Peter's on the Vatican: The First Complete Account In Our English Tongue Of Its Origins And Reconstruction* [New York: Strand Press, 1939], 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²² Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 9.

²³ McNally, *St. Peter's on the Vatican*, 5.

Nicholas V envisioned a contemporary St. Peter's, one that would embrace the humanist style of classical works and augment a beautiful and more modern Rome. Throughout Europe, church-building thrived, displaying a town's wealth and reflecting the "spirit of a community animated with a sense of independence and of strength, and becoming confident of perpetuity."²⁴ Nicholas V's vision for a beautiful, modern basilica, inspired by works from the greatest artists of the time, would also accommodate the pontifical ceremonies that the court and the pope's role as sovereign were making more and more complex.²⁵

Nicholas V's decision came in the middle of the Italian Renaissance, a period ranging from the mid-fourteenth to mid-sixteenth centuries, and marked by the rediscovery of classical antiquity. As part of this epoch, humanism emerged, focusing on the "study of man in the context of social life, nature, the arts, politics, education, and spirituality."²⁶ Its focus lay in five areas: rhetoric, grammar, poetry, history, and moral philosophy.²⁷ Humanists believed that "before the West could surpass antiquity, it had to know and make available what the ancients knew and did. Bringing that about in literature, science, philosophy, and theology was one of the greatest achievements of the Renaissance humanists."²⁸ Humanism was a cultural movement of learning, based on the Greek and Latin classics, such as writings by Plato and Aristotle, and was secular in nature.²⁹ Many of the translated texts "offered a perspective on man and the universe dramatically different from the stern proscriptions of the medieval Church. The romantic

²⁴ Charles Eliot Norton, *Historical Studies of Church-Building in the Middle Ages* [New York: Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square, 1880], 21.

²⁵ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 9.

²⁶ Christine Dudding, "Humanism and the Italian Renaissance" [master's thesis, Rollins College, 1991], 21.

²⁷ Rutledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, General editor – Edward Craig [London and New York, 1998], 535.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 537.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

ideals of man and nature, celebrated in ancient Athens, were an aphrodisiac after the absolute authority of a punitive, omnipotent God.”³⁰ The secular emphasis of humanism presented a problem for the Church, as many people changed their focus from God and the divine to Man. In this period of cultural change, Nicholas V, who agreed with many humanist ideals, recognized the importance of keeping the Church within the framework of humanism and the Renaissance. If the Church was to remain a focal point to inspire the faithful, it would need to keep up with cultural change, particularly one as strong as the humanist movement.

While many humanists were Christians, including some popes, many people were enticed by the moral standards of pagan antiquity, and “moral relations, especially marriage, became the subject of ribald jest. In their private lives many humanists were deficient in moral sense, while the morals of the upper classes degenerated into a pitiable excess of unrestrained individualism.”³¹ Nicholas V would have preferred to have humanism kept within the framework of Christianity. His wisdom, however, was in recognizing the importance of the Christian Church keeping in step with the times, and “he sought, by the erection of buildings and the collection of books, to restore the glory of Rome.”³² The study of humanities offered “the classical Greek education of liberal learning, especially literature and rhetoric, which was believed to develop the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic capacities of a child.”³³ In renewing St. Peter’s and the surrounding

³⁰ R. A. Scotti, *Basilica The Sendor and Scandal: Building St. Peter’s* [New York, Penguin Group, 2007], 19.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Klemens Löffler, "Humanism." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 7. [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910.] 18 Mar. 2011 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07538b.htm>

³³ *Rutledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, General editor – Edward Craig [London and New York, 1998], 533.

city, Christians would reunite with the Church, resulting in a return to morality and centripetency with the papacy.

Nicholas V “had two soaring ideas,” his secretary and biographer Giannozzo Manetti wrote, “the Renaissance of the world by learning and the turning of the eyes of Christendom to a Vatican which should outshine in magnificence the Palantine of the Emperors.”³⁴ By embracing humanism instead of resisting it, Nicholas V related to Christians and humanists alike. He was eager to emphasize intellectualism and, in addition to beginning work on New St. Peters, he was credited with creating the Vatican Library, which, at the time, surpassed all others in the number and value of its manuscripts. The pope encouraged especially “translations from the Greek, and with important results, although no one won the prize of ten thousand gulden offered for a complete translation of Homer.”³⁵ Nicholas V proclaimed 1450 to be a Jubilee year, calling on all penitent pilgrims to come to Rome and gain a plenary indulgence for their pilgrimage that would wipe away the penance incurred by their sins.³⁶ Bruno Contardi writes, “for the first time since 1300 Rome had a resident pope, unchallenged by any rival, and the Jubilee became a symbol of the restored unity and peace of the Church.”³⁷ The

³⁴ R. A. Scotti, *Basilica The Splendor and Scandal: Building St. Peter's* [New York, Penguin Group, 2007], 20.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “The main conditions of a Jubilee year are three: confession, Communion and visits to the four basilicas during a certain specified period.” Herbert Thurston, “Holy Year of Jubilee.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 8 [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910]. 13 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08531c.htm>>.

Per the *Catholic Encyclopedia*: By a plenary indulgence is meant the remission of the entire temporal punishment due to sin so that no further expiation is required in Purgatory. William Kent, “Indulgences.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 7. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. 13 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm>>.

Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol.II* [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950], 166.

³⁷ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 137.

faithful “descended on Rome from all over Europe.”³⁸ While Nicholas V preached against the *sale* of indulgences, he was among many who ascribed to the Church’s doctrine that indulgences could be offered to those who paid with good works, including pilgrimages and almsgiving, to the treasury of the Church. The Vatican treasury filled, and Nicholas V envisioned an urban renaissance.³⁹

When Nicholas V died in 1455, his dream of a new St. Peter’s remained a dream. He had done very little other than demolishing some of the old St. Peter’s and starting on the new choir extension behind the apse of the old church.⁴⁰ On his deathbed, he reportedly said to his cardinals that:

The learned who had studied antiquity could truly understand the greatness and authority of Rome, but to create solid and stable convictions in the minds of the uncultured masses, there must be something that appeals to the eye: a popular faith, sustained only on doctrines, will never be anything but feeble and vacillating. But if the authority of the Holy See were visibly displayed in majestic buildings, imperishable memorials and witnesses seemingly planted by the hand of God himself, belief would grow and strengthen like a tradition from one generation to another, and all the world would accept and revere it.⁴¹

Humanism in Italy continued to flourish for almost 75 years after Nicholas V died.

During that time a number of popular humanists contributed to the Italian Renaissance. Among them was Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), a priest, philosopher, and physician who translated the works of Plato into Latin. Ficino believed Plato was a forerunner to Christ and that his word should be read in the churches.⁴² Also, Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494) wrote the *Miscellanea*, which summed up the principles of the previous humanists and

³⁸ R.A.Scotti, *Basilica The Spendor and Scandal*, 20.

³⁹ Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997], 137-41.

⁴⁰ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter’s* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 127.

⁴¹ Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners*, 139.

⁴² Matthew Schumacher. "Marsilio Ficino." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 6. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. 19 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06067b.htm>>.

established how to cite sources precisely.⁴³ While writers like these stimulated intellectual discourse and an appreciation for the humanities, there were also rumblings in the Church and among its members. With Christians connecting with pagan ideas and clerical abuses occurring at the highest level, Christianity was strained. Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), a devout Christian and prominent humanist author, gained fame for his writings, including his updated editions of the New Testament in Latin and Greek and his play against corruption and abuses in the Church, *The Praise of Folly*.⁴⁴

Desiderius Erasmus's "declamationlet," *The Praise of Folly*, was written in 1509 and dedicated to his dear friend, Sir Thomas More. In it, Erasmus used satire and humor to poke fun at the Church and society. His work also sent a more serious message to the Catholic Church about clerical abuses in the form of indulgences, idealistic pilgrimages, and the "veneration of images and relics."⁴⁵ He argued that "good works" were replacing faith and worship. In an effort to maintain a neutral relationship with the Church, Erasmus wrote in his preface, "If anyone complains that he's been harmed, it's either his conscience that accuses him or his guilt."⁴⁶ With the invention of the printing press, Erasmus became a best-selling author. He was a devoted Catholic during his lifetime, in spite of his frustrations with clerical abuse, the sale of indulgences, and corruption in the

⁴³ Rutledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, General editor – Edward Craig [London and New York, 1998], 538.

⁴⁴ Joseph Sauer. "Desiderius Erasmus." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 5. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. 20 Apr. 2011 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05510b.htm>>.

⁴⁵ H.R. Trevor-Roper "Critical Commentary: Desiderius Erasmus." In *The Praise of Folly and Other Writings* [New York, W. W. Norton, 1989], 267-85.

⁴⁶ Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly and Other Writings*, trans. Robert M. Adams [New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1989], 5.

Church. In addition, most historians consider Desiderius Erasmus the man who “laid the egg that Martin Luther hatched” when it came to the Reformation.⁴⁷

Nicholas V wisely understood the changes taking place in Italy in the fifteenth century, and he envisioned a need for the Church to reinvent itself in an effort to keep its flock in place. The Church would need something big, “a temple, so glorious and beautiful that it seemed rather a divine than a human creation.”⁴⁸ After Nicholas V’s death in 1455, it would be almost fifty years before a pope would come along who shared Nicholas V’s passion and vision for a new basilica. Those years were fraught with corruption, greed, and nepotism in the Church. The popes who held office between Nicholas V and Julius II were more concerned with family and personal aggrandizement than the strengthening of the Church and the urban development of Rome.⁴⁹ If ever there was a need to inspire the faithful and draw them back into the fold, it would be in 1503, when Julius II (della Rovere, r. 1503-1513) became the 213th pope. Julius II shared Nicholas V’s dreams for New St. Peter’s, however, he needed a financing source to fulfill his aspirations. For this, he turned to the sale of indulgences.

⁴⁷ "Erasmus." Greatsite.com: antique Bibles, rare Bibles, ancient Bible leaves. <http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/erasmus.html> (accessed March 19, 2011).

⁴⁸ R. A. Scotti, *Basilica The Sendor and Scandal: Building St. Peter's* [New York, Penguin Group, 2007], 21.

⁴⁹ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol. VI* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 456.

Chapter Two: A History of Early Indulgences

When indulgences were included in the Canon Law of the Christian church, their intended use was to give people a reasonable way of satisfying the punishment for their sinful acts. They were generally secured with good works, such as extra prayers, pilgrimages, or almsgiving. However, during the Middle Ages and early Italian Renaissance, fear, ignorance, and misunderstanding led to abuses of indulgences, bringing them to the forefront in Martin Luther's *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* (a.k.a. Luther's *Ninety-five Theses*) and the subsequent Reformation. Priests began selling indulgences and they preyed on innocent believers. Their hard-sale approach, frequently referred to as "hawking," was fraught with lies and empty promises in exchange for money, and it angered Martin Luther. In his *Ninety-five Theses*, Luther wrote, "Christians are to be taught that it would be the pope's wish, as it is his duty, to give of his own money to very many of those from whom certain hawkers of pardons cajole money, even though the church of St. Peter might have to be sold."¹ Luther recognized that the priests' greed and desire for power in Rome was the chief motivator for indulgence sales, and he was outraged. Luther wrote, "Indulgences, which the merchants extol as the greatest of favours, are seen to be, in fact, a favourite means for money-getting."² Ironically, rather than rendering Rome more powerful, indulgences were the tipping point that ignited the Reformation, started the Protestant Church, and sent droves of Christians away from the Catholic Church. Their abuse brought attention to other corrupt activities in the Catholic Church, paving the way for the Council of Trent

¹ See Appendix H: Dr. Martin Luther, "Luther's 95 Theses." The Spurgeon Archive. <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/95theses.htm> (accessed April 22, 2011).

² Ibid.

and the Counter Reformation. In essence, indulgences, and their role in the construction of New St. Peter's, changed the course of history by establishing a new form of religion.

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, indulgences were not originally fundraising instruments intended for building churches. They were and are a part of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, one of seven sacraments, or rites, of the Church. They are still included in the *1983 Code of Canon Law* (see Appendix A). According to the *Code of Canon Law*: "An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment for sins the guilt of which has already been forgiven, which a properly disposed member of the Christian faithful obtains under certain and definite conditions with the help of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies authoritatively the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints."³ Indulgences were offered beginning around the fourth century in exchange for works or money, including almsgiving, and the practice was widely accepted by a public that was more than willing to pay money as a way of serving their penance. Since these alms provided much of the revenue needed for crusades, and later the costs to build New St. Peter's, the exchange of indulgences for alms, later deemed "sales," rose in the years prior to the Reformation. It would take a ruling by the Council of Trent in December 1563 to denounce the formal sale of indulgences.⁴ In the "Decree against Indulgences," the Council states that, "all evil traffic in them (indulgences), which has been a most prolific source of abuses among the Christian people, be absolutely abolished."⁵

³ Libreria Editrice Vaticana, "Code of Canon Law," Vatican Library, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/___P3I.HTM [accessed January 30, 2011].

⁴ William Kent, "Indulgences," In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New Advent, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm> [accessed January 15, 2011].

⁵ Rev. H.J. Schroeder, O.P., *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* [Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers], 253.

The intended disposition of an indulgence was this: the Christian Church kept a spiritual “treasury” of good works that was built up by the merits of Christ and of the saints.⁶ These merits were stored up and accessible to the Church—similar to a “Utopian commonwealth where all the surplus wealth of the successful citizens should be set apart for the poor and needy, and portioned out to them according to their necessities.”⁷ When Christians sinned, they were required to confess their sin, be penitent, have intentions not to repeat their sin, and to ask for forgiveness. After the priest gave them sacramental absolution, they received a penance, or punishment, to carry out. In place of all or part of their punishment, the priest could grant the repented sinner an indulgence.⁸ An indulgence placed at the penitent's disposal the aforementioned treasury to draw upon as retribution for their sinful act.⁹ In effect, one paid for the merits in the treasury through assigned “good works,” such as making a pilgrimage, participating in a Crusade, almsgiving, or saying special prayers for the Pope.¹⁰

Indulgences date back to about the third century. At that time they were not called ‘indulgences,’ but rather were Latin terms that included *remissio*, *absolutio*, and *relaxatio*.¹¹ The terms represented acts of reconciliation, forgiveness, or reduction of penances respectively. By the fifth century, the discipline of the Church toward those who

⁶ Rev. H.J. Schroeder, O.P., *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* [Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers], 253.

⁷ The Rev. John F. Sullivan, *The Externals of the Catholic Church: Her Government, Ceremonies, Festivals, Sacramentals, and Devotions* [New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1917] Open Library, http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7159079M/The_externals_of_the_Catholic_church [accessed January 30, 2011], 296.

⁸ William Kent, “Indulgences,” In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New Advent, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm> [accessed January 15, 2011].

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Enrico Dal Covolo, S.D.B., “The Historical Origins of Indulgences,” *Catholic Culture*, <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?id=1054&CFID=65596584&CFTOKEN=71782472> [accessed January 15, 2011].

sinned was very severe.¹² Prisons were overcrowded. If one was very penitent, he or she could send a message to the Pope or bishop offering to substitute works of merit in place of their time in prison. Family members could also offer their built-up merits to pay for the penance of their loved one. The sinner was then restored to full membership in the Church.¹³ The benefit was threefold: prisons were less crowded, good works (e.g., alms) were bestowed, and the penitent would, hopefully, go and sin no more. In 517C.E., the Council of Epaon officially acknowledged that severe penances could be replaced by milder punishments, and by the seventh century, *redemptio*—a form of commutation of penance in Ireland and England—accepted lesser forms of punishments including fasting, prayers, the payment of fixed sums of money, pilgrimages, and almsgiving (money given for charity and not a fixed sum).¹⁴

During the Carolingian era (eighth to ninth centuries) the word *indulgentia* was used in reference to the various terms that defined a reduction of penance. During this era, a great effort was made to develop a language that would be recognized throughout Europe so that scholars could communicate with each other. *Indulgentia* prevailed as the term used from this point for the reduction of penance. Father Enrico dal Covolo noted in his article, “The Historical Origin of Indulgences” that “towards the end of the Carolingian era and even later, the custom of seeking an absolution in every circumstance and on every occasion, and before any work, became widespread in medieval society. In other words, the faithful were administered a prayer formula so that God would forgive

¹² The Rev. John F. Sullivan, *The Externals of the Catholic Church: Her Government, Ceremonies, Festivals, Sacramentals, and Devotions* [New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1917] Open Library, http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7159079M/The_externals_of_the_Catholic_church [accessed January 30, 2011], 298.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

their sins.”¹⁵ Similar to confession, *indulgentia* constituted a unique kind of penitence and forgiveness process.¹⁶ These earliest *indulgentia* or indulgences “were made with conditions more or less equivalent to the exercises of penance itself. It would be difficult today to recognize their nature as indulgences. Nevertheless, they represent the first examples of modern indulgences, that is, good works offered to all in exchange for the temporal punishment due to sin.”¹⁷ Almsgiving was considered one form of good works, but a sinner could also visit a new church or make a pilgrimage in lieu of paying penance.

Indulgences were granted as early as the tenth century, but they were not easy to get. Due to the decentralized government, there were many towns and villages, most with a lay priest or an abbot from a local monastery assigned to them. Since an indulgence could only be granted by the Pope or a bishop, the local priest explained to his parishioners how to go about getting the lighter penance. If the sinner could find a bishop nearby to grant the *indulgentia*, the bishop usually called on the penitential manual for the appropriate penance.¹⁸ There were two kinds of indulgences: plenary and partial. Plenary indulgences, or “full indulgences,” remitted all “temporal punishment.”¹⁹ They were rare and generally had to come from the Pope. The Pope also possessed the power to permit others (e.g., bishops) to grant plenary indulgences. The penitent must avoid all sin after

¹⁵ The Rev. John F. Sullivan, *The Externals of the Catholic Church: Her Government, Ceremonies, Festivals, Sacramentals, and Devotions* [New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1917] Open Library, http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7159079M/The_externals_of_the_Catholic_church [accessed January 30, 2011], 298.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The Rev. John F. Sullivan, *The Externals of the Catholic Church: Her Government, Ceremonies, Festivals, Sacramentals, and Devotions* [New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1917] Open Library, http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7159079M/The_externals_of_the_Catholic_church [accessed January 30, 2011], 298.

¹⁸ Marshall W. Baldwin, *The Mediaeval Church* [Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982], 8-9.

¹⁹ Temporal punishment is suffering that occurs either in this life or in purgatory that can only be remitted by penance. It is the punishment that occurs after God has pardoned the sinner. Edward Hanna. "Purgatory." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 12. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. 20 Apr. 2011 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12575a.htm>>.

receiving their plenary indulgence. Partial indulgences replaced part of one's penance.²⁰

There were several things one had to do to gain an indulgence, including: one must be in a state of grace, he must perform the penance just as it is given to him, and he must make every effort to avoid further sin. Also, in some cases bishops would require confession, communion, and prayers for the Pope. Frequently, the suggested amount was five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys.²¹

The first recorded plenary indulgence was introduced in the late eleventh century. The plenary indulgence given by Pope Urban II in 1095 was for the Holy Crusaders, those urged to go to the Holy Land and regain the land from the Muslims.²² In 1095, Alexios I Komnenos, the Byzantine emperor, asked Urban II for help in fighting the Seljuq Turks, who had taken most of Asia Minor from him, including Jerusalem. Urban II called a council to meet in Clermont, France that included 300 clerics, including bishops, abbots, and lords. At the Council of Clermont, held from November 19 to 28, 1095, Urban II called on the Church to send crusaders to Jerusalem to free it from the occupancy of the Turks.²³ Urban noted that Jerusalem was a holy site that had been invaded by Muslims, preventing pilgrims from going there to worship. One of the attendees at the council, Robert the Monk, wrote that Urban II said in his speech:

From the confines of Jerusalem and from the city of Constantinople a grievous report has gone forth and has repeatedly been brought to our ears; namely, that a race from the kingdom of the Persians, an accursed race, a race wholly alienated from God, `a generation that set not their heart aright and whose spirit was not

²⁰ The Rev. John F. Sullivan, *The Externals of the Catholic Church: Her Government, Ceremonies, Festivals, Sacramentals, and Devotions* [New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1917] Open Library, http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7159079M/The_externals_of_the_Catholic_church [accessed January 30, 2011], 297.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Michael J. Walsh, "Roman Catholicism: The Basics." *NetLibrary*. 2005. <http://www.netlibrary.com/Reader/> (accessed January 15, 2011). [London, New York, Routledge, 2005]

²³ James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History: Vol. I:* [Boston: Ginn and Co., 1904], 312-316. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2a.html> [accessed April 20, 2011].

steadfast with God,' violently invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by pillage and fire. They have led away a part of the captives into their own country, and a part have they killed by cruel tortures. They have either destroyed the churches of God or appropriated them for the rites of their own religion. They destroy the altars, after having defiled them with their uncleanness.²⁴

While slightly differing accounts of Urban's speech were recounted, all concurred that Urban promised those who went to Jerusalem, or died trying to get there, a plenary indulgence. He urged them to let go of their earthly ties and head into battle, knowing that Christ was leading the way and there would be great reward in heaven through the indulgence that promised remission of all penitential practices incurred by the crusaders provided they confess their sins.²⁵ Some witnesses recalled Pope Urban II granting a general plenary indulgence, and others recalled that it would be granted only if one died during the journey. The former must have been what the crusaders heard, for "the idea was favorably received throughout Europe, and innumerable multitudes were speedily on their way, bearing a cross on the shoulder in sign of penitence, and shouting *Deus lo volt!* (God wills it!)"²⁶ According to an eyewitness to the event, Fulcher of Chartres, the multitudes included women, peasants, and elderly, all joining the crusade to fight in the Holy War.²⁷

By the mid-thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas addressed indulgences in his *Summa Theologica*. This work offered an authoritative summary of a number of questions

²⁴ James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History: Vol. I*: [Boston: Ginn and Co., 1904], 312-316. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2a.html> [accessed April 20, 2011].

²⁵ Romanus Cessario, O.P., "St. Thomas Aquinas on Satisfaction, Indulgences, and Crusades," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 2 [1992]: 74-96.

²⁶ Henry Charles Lea, LL.D., *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church, Volume III* [New York: Greenwood Press, 1968], 10.

²⁷ August C. Krey, ed. and tr., *The First Crusade. The Accounts of Eye-witnesses and Participants* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1921). Public domain. <http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/firstcrusade.htm> [accessed April 20, 2011].

about Catholicism and taught those who were new to the Faith. In addressing the issue of indulgences, Aquinas commented on the following three points:

1. Does an indulgence remit any part of the punishment due for the satisfaction of sins?
2. Are indulgences as effective as they claim to be?
3. Should an indulgence be granted for temporal assistance?²⁸

St. Thomas Aquinas responded to these questions by explaining that, “indulgences hold good both in the Church’s court and in the judgment of God, for the remission of the punishment which remains after contrition, absolution, and confession, whether this punishment be enjoined or not.”²⁹ In Aquinas’ view, “the theology of indulgences simply develops the general theological axiom that one person can share according to some determined measure in the good deeds of another person. To put it differently, as much as Christians ought to pray for and help one another, indulgences are a way of giving concrete expression to the communion of saints.”³⁰ At this point, the abuses that would later be so contemptible did not exist and people paid for their indulgence mainly with prayers, offerings, and other good works.

Another question about indulgences that St. Thomas Aquinas examined at length was whether one could grant an indulgence to someone who was dead. Aquinas believed that the Church had jurisdiction in the afterlife and that indulgences for the dead were valid. He explained how indulgences could benefit the dead, arguing “the dead in purgatory could receive indulgences that had been specifically proclaimed for them (the blessed did not need them and the damned could not use them), because the dead, like the living, were

²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theologica, Question 25: Indulgences,” New Advent, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/5025.htm> [accessed January 15, 2011].

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Romanus Cessario, O.P., “St. Thomas Aquinas on Satisfaction, Indulgences, and Crusades,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 2 [1992]: 74-75.

on the road to salvation, and all such Christians were under the jurisdiction of the Church.”³¹ Therefore, the dead could benefit from the “treasury of merit” as well as the living.

Thus, by the late Middle Ages, granting and receiving indulgences, whether for oneself or for a deceased loved one, was innocuous in most areas. That is, the greed that corrupted indulgence sales which would prevail in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did not yet exist. However, in the late fourteenth century, the idea of offering alms for an indulgence began to develop into an established cost for an indulgence. Geoffrey Chaucer brought attention to this concept when he wrote about the pilgrimage site, Canterbury. Canterbury was “the site of the martyrdom in 1170 of Thomas Beckett, immortalized in *The Canterbury Tales*.”³² Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* spotlighted the rising greed in the Church. After the Pardoner told the tale of the three travelers who died trying to greedily outsmart each other and take all the gold coins they had found, he proceeded to sell fake religious relics to those too gullible to know better. He also hawked indulgences, which people purchased believing they would receive penance for their sins.³³ Chaucer’s attention to indulgences most likely reflected the public’s awareness of the wickedness and rapacity of such sales.

Meanwhile, pilgrimages to sites like Canterbury or the Holy Land (Palestine and Israel) remained very popular. In 1503, Pope Julius II recognized the monetary and spiritual value of such sites, and he made the decision to make Rome the greatest

³¹ Robert W. Shaffern, "Learned Discussions of Indulgences for the Dead in the Middle Ages." *Church History* 61 [December 1992]: 367-381.

³² Michael J. Walsh, "Roman Catholicism: The Basics." *NetLibrary*. 2005. <http://www.netlibrary.com/Reader/> (accessed January 15, 2011). [London, New York, Routledge, 2005]

³³ Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Pardoner's Tale," http://www.canterburytales.org/canterbury_tales.html [accessed April 20, 2011].

pilgrimage destination. To ensure this, he would tear down the old basilica of St. Peter and build a new St. Peter's, and it would be the grandest church in all of Christendom. By the sixteenth century, indulgences were proven moneymakers and Julius II needed a great deal of money to build the basilica. His main intent with the bull, *Liquet omnibus*, issued in 1510, was to generate great sums of money to build New St. Peter's and draw the faithful to Rome. Julius II's bull, "which seven years afterward was destined to excite Luther's revolt, put up for sale with cynical boldness almost everything that the Church could offer attractive to sinners, and licensed almost everything that the Church was organized to repress."³⁴ The message being sent was that one could do almost anything, and an indulgence could replace the penance for the sin. This bull set clear financial conditions to all Christians hoping to gain the indulgence. They were to "deposit in the chest the price determined by the commissioner or his delegates," and the prices of indulgences were set according to their ability to pay.³⁵ For example, Archbishop Albert of Mainz and Magdeburg set the following standards: kings, princes and great prelates paid twenty-five Rhenish gold gulden for an indulgence; abbots, cathedral dignitaries and nobles paid ten gulden; lesser prelates, nobles, and traders with an income over five hundred gulden paid six gulden, burghers and merchants whose revenues were about two hundred gulden paid three gulden; and below these the amount paid was a half to one gulden. If one was too poor to pay anything, they were given other works, such as fasting or prayers.³⁶

³⁴ Henry Charles Lea, LL.D, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church, Volume III* [New York: Greenwood Press, 1968], 74.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 390.

At first, money flowed in from Julius II's bull. Historian Henry Lea shares, "In the ages prior to the Reformation, indulgences were among the most potent agencies—perhaps the most potent—in furnishing the Church with ready money." Within a decade, however, Julius II's method of raising funds for New St. Peter's, now under the jurisdiction of Pope Leo (de Medici, r. 1513-1521) backfired. Indulgence hawkers angered many, including Martin Luther. Luther responded to indulgence sales with his *Ninety-five Theses*, and the Church was changed forever.

Chapter Three: Corruption and the Papacy

The popes who reigned during the Italian Renaissance bore little resemblance to popes today. While they were the leaders of the Catholic Church many were not sacred, pious men who worshiped daily, abandoned their worldly goods, and practiced celibacy. Politics and power ruled the papacy and with those came godlessness, simony, and secularism. “Where moral purity languishes, faith cannot fail to suffer” wrote Ludwig von Pastor in his book, *A History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*.¹ From Pius II (Piccolomini, r. 1458-1464) to Clement VIII (Aldobrandini, r. 1592-1605), the avarice and licentiousness of the times rose and fell along with the building of St. Peter’s. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Church was unsustainable, led by popes who lacked vision for the future of St. Peter’s and the Church in general.

Understanding the mayhem of the papacy at the time helps explain why it took so long to build the basilica. Building St. Peter’s was very expensive. Some popes considered the goal of building St. Peter’s a high priority, one worthy of doing whatever it took, including lying and stealing, while others did not. Some popes inherited filled papal coffers, and some did not. Money came and went through Rome and was spent by the popes according to their politics and desires. The popes who reigned in the period leading up to the Reformation demonstrate the direction of the papacy during the period from 1455 to 1503, including the need for reform that would come in the early sixteenth century and how, amidst the struggles of the Catholic Church, St. Peter’s kept inching toward completion.

¹ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol. V* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 171.

Nine years after Nicholas V died, Pietro Barbo became Pope Paul II (Barbo, r. 1464-1467). Paul II was “a man of lavish tastes who loved games, ceremonial and the Roman Carnival, and who was intensely proud of his own good looks.”² Paul II enjoyed the wealth that came to the papacy from the discovery of alum mines, a commodity used for the dying of wool, in papal territory. The papacy now had a monopoly on alum in the West and a bull was issued encouraging Christians to only buy their alum from the papacy.³ Prior to becoming pope, Paul II agreed with the other cardinals that the money should be used to promote a new crusade. After becoming pope, however, Paul II rejected the idea, fearing that the submission they had agreed to would eventually limit his papal primacy.⁴ Paul II’s interests, aside from festivals and celebrations, centered on art and antiquities. He was also very interested in the printing press and established the first presses in Rome.⁵ Like many of the popes during that time, Paul II was less concerned about his flock and more focused on his own interests due to his limitless authority.

Sixtus IV (della Rovere, r.1471-1484) took the office of pope after Paul II and was primarily noteworthy for compulsively spending money. In his first act as pope, Sixtus spent 100,000 ducati on his coronation tiara, more than a third of the papacy’s annual income.⁶ Sixtus IV came from extreme poverty and became “inordinately profligate of money, spending whatever funds he could lay his hands upon.”⁷ He loved art and enjoyed commissioning art for the papal palace. He also regularly dispensed money to family members, particularly his nephews. His favorite nephew, Cardinal Pietro Riario, once

² Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997], 142.

³ Roger Collins, *Keepers of the Keys of Heaven* [New York: Perseus Books Group, 2009], 328.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Duffy, *Saints and Sinners*, 142.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter’s* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 128.

gave a banquet, at the papacy's expense, in honor of the Princess Leonara of Naples. It was an extravagant affair that lasted several hours. Forty-four dishes were served, including "stags roasted whole, and in their skins, goats, hares, calves, herons, peacocks with their feathers, and finally, a bear with a staff in his jaws."⁸ The feast was held at great expense during a time when the Turks were a serious threat to the papal states and money for Crusades was critically needed.⁹ This was an example of how the papacy displayed depravity and loose morals, which would eventually cause Christians to leave the Church.

Overspending was just the beginning of Sixtus IV's profligate ways. He took nepotism to new heights, making six of his nephews cardinals. The Renaissance popes were known for their lack of trust for the cardinals, who could be hostile and fractional, and they relied heavily on the counsel and advice of their relatives.¹⁰ Family members were put on the papacy payroll as personal guards, or made political leaders and officers in the army. Family issues and dynastic advancement became primary concerns for the pope, and in 1478 the Pazzi family, allies of the pope, attempted a coup on two of the Medici family, another powerful family in Florence. The targeted Medici were to be murdered during mass. Giuliano de Medici was stabbed several times and died, but his brother, Lorenzo, survived. Roger Collins writes, "although unproven, it is generally assumed that the pope himself was aware of the plot and had given his consent."¹¹ The conspirators, including Archbishop Salviati, were caught and hanged from the windows of

⁸ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol IV* [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950], 243-5..

⁹ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 128-9.

¹⁰ Roger Collins, *Keepers of the Keys of Heaven* [New York: Perseus Books Group, 2009], 330.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

the Palazzo Vecchio.¹² The scene was later depicted in a drawing in 1479 by Leonardo da Vinci. These wars came at a great cost, necessitating tax increases, which prompted riots in the Papal States and a demand for reform. It also rejuvenated the sale of offices and indulgences.¹³ In addition to the cost of wars, Sixtus IV needed money for his building projects, including his *pièce de résistance*, the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.

Sixtus IV's final resting place is yet another example of his decadent spending. His memorial is a tomb by Antonio Pollaiuolo and is in the crypt, under St. Peter's. It is



of his tomb in the



Leonardo da Vinci, 1479, a hanged Pazzi
Bernardo di Bandino Baroncelli

made of

bronze and the pope is lying with his head on a tasseled pillow, wearing the tiara. It is considered a masterpiece “of incomparable workmanship.”¹⁴ Sixtus left the papal coffers in shambles, having spent all that was available, and

then some.

Pope Innocent VIII (Cibo, r. 1484-1492), was far more astute when it came to money and business than his predecessor. The night before his election, he bribed electors

¹² Roger Collins, *Keepers of the Keys of Heaven* [New York: Perseus Books Group, 2009], 331.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

¹⁴ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 130.

by countersigning petitions for promotions brought to him in his cell.¹⁵ Innocent VIII quickly rid the office of the expensive tiara Sixtus had commissined, pawning it for 100,000 ducati. One of his more shrewd means for replenishing the papal coffers involved a treaty he made in 1489 with the Turkish Sultan Bayazed II.¹⁶ Bayazed, successor to the position of sultan by virtue of being the oldest son, was betrayed by his younger brother, Cen, who approached Innocent VIII, hoping to make a treaty with him and soliciting his assistance in overthrowing Cen's brother, the new sultan.¹⁷ Cen's plot backfired. Innocent VIII told Bayazed of the plot, who offered to send Innocent VIII a payment of 120,000 crowns (equal to the total annual revenue of the papal state) plus 45,000 ducati per year to keep Cem in custody.¹⁸ In addition to the money, Bayazed gave Innocent VIII an extraordinary relic: the head, or lance, of Longinus's spear which had pierced the side of Jesus on the cross.¹⁹ The Holy Lance, which was missing the pointed end, is among the four most treasured relics housed today in St. Peter's Basilica.

Prior to becoming a bishop, Innocent VIII fathered two illegitimate children. As one of his sons approached the age to be married, he turned his back on the man who helped elect him as pope, Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, and allied himself with the Medici, enemies of the della Rovere, marrying his son to the daughter of Lorenzo de Medici, now the undisputed master of Florence. Innocent VIII also made Lorenzo's son, only thirteen at the time, a cardinal.²⁰ That son would later become Pope Leo X. Morally

¹⁵ Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997], 149.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁹ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 131.

²⁰ Roger Collins, *Keepers of the Keys of Heaven* [New York: Perseus Books Group, 2009], 334.

and ethically, Innocent VIII 's time in office reflected the demise of a virtuous papacy, angering those who viewed corruption in the Church getting worse.

Innocent VIII's morals were hardly reflective of our current-day worldview of the papacy. However, "his note became a concerto" under the moral and ethical ways of his Spanish successor, Rodrigo Borgia.²¹ Pope Alexander VI (de Borgia, r. 1492 – 1503) fathered at least nine illegitimate children, including two while he was pope. He lived openly with mistresses and was "widely believed to have made a habit of poisoning his cardinals so as to get his hands on their property."²² Alexander VI's time in office was marred by nepotism, scandal, and unforeseen disasters from his election until his death in August 1503.²³

At the outset of the 1492 election, Borgia was not considered favored to win. He was a foreigner, a Spaniard against twenty-two Italian Cardinals, of whom eight were nephews of former popes, making him an unlikely candidate. However, as a Cardinal for 35 years, he amassed much wealth and power.²⁴ Borgia was Vice-Chancellor, an office considered second to the papacy, and with that title came one of several palaces he owned. Since popes must give up their worldly goods, Borgia began bargaining with the other candidates. He offered palaces, bishoprics, castles, and money in exchange for votes.²⁵ Those who were bribed quickly worked to get other Cardinals on board in electing

²¹ Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997], 146.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²³ During his time in office, the Tiber river overflowed and flooded the city, costing many Romans their lives and treasures, his son was murdered, his antechamber was struck by lightning, and the Castle of San Angelo was blown up. Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol V* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 499.

²⁴ Roger Collins, *Keepers of the Keys of Heaven* [New York: Perseus Books Group, 2009], 335.

²⁵ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol V* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 382-3.

Borgia.²⁶ In the early morning hours of 11 August, 1492, Rodrigo Borgia was elected. His election was unexpected and “was obtained by the rankest simony. Such were the means, as the annalist of the Church says, by which in accordance with the inscrutable counsels of Divine Providence, a man attained to the highest dignity, who in the early days of the Church would not have been admitted even to the lowest rank of the clergy, on account of his immoral life. The days of distress and confusion began for the Roman Church.”²⁷

Alexander VI’s simony began early, and his papacy drew criticism just as early. When the list was read of how his worldly goods, which were to go to the poor, were disbursed, it was clear that the Cardinals who had voted for him were the recipients of his greatest riches. Soon after, he appointed several family members to high posts, including his favored son, Pedro Luis, as Duke of Gandia. He made his second son, Cesare, Bishop of Valencia, which was worth 16,000 ducati.²⁸ The following year, he nominated thirteen new Cardinals, including—again—his son, Cesare, strengthening and widening his power in Italy, Spain, and Europe and angering his opposition. One of the newly-appointed Cardinals, Alessandro Farnese, was made head of the Treasury. This appointment also drew criticism as it was widely believed Farnese’s sister, Guilia, was Alexander VI’s concubine.²⁹

There was a very short period of his papacy during which Alexander VI considered reforming himself and the Church. His son, the Duke of Gandia, was murdered, his body

²⁶ Examples of the offers Rodrigo Borgia made included the office of Vice-Chancellor, along with a palace, a castle, the Bishopric of Erlau, and a revenue of 10,000 ducats to Ascanio Sforza, the cardinal from Milan. Pastor, *The History of the Popes Vol V*, 382.

²⁷ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Age,s Vol. V* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 385.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 398.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 416-17.

thrown into the Tiber river, sending Alexander VI into inconsolable mourning. Days later, when he emerged after several nights without sleep or food, he spoke of reform. A letter to Giovanni Bentivoglio on June 20, 1497, said, “The Pope is deeply distressed at the loss he has sustained, and is minded to change his life and become a different man. He has gone to St. Peter’s and intends to erect the Tribune for the high altar there, according to the design of Nicholas V, which will cost 50,000 ducati.”³⁰ Alexander VI established a commission of six Cardinals and two Auditors of the Rota who stated, “from henceforth benefices shall only be given to deserving persons, and in accordance with the votes of the Cardinals. We renounce all nepotism, We will begin the reform with ourselves and so proceed through all ranks of the Church till the whole work is accomplished.”³¹ A comprehensive Bull of Reform was drafted and addressed many of the abuses to be remedied, including an end to the sale of offices, limiting the number of Bishoprics a Cardinal could possess to one, prohibitions against simoniacal practices at Papal elections, and even an order stating cardinals could not employ boys and youths as body servants.³² (See Appendix C.) Alexander VI was well aware of the populace’s bitter feelings about corrupt practices and simony within the Church leadership.³³ The Bull of Reform was his opportunity to change the direction of the papacy. However, it did not happen. The Bull remained in draft form and was soon forgotten. Alexander VI returned to his old ways, and “all desire for better things was stifled by the demon of sensuality.”³⁴

³⁰ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol V* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 499.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 500.

³² *Ibid.*, 516-17.

³³ *Ibid.*, 518.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Six years after the Bull of Reform was drafted, Alexander VI increased the College of Cardinals by nine Cardinals, four of whom were replacement positions. Five of the new Cardinals were Spaniards, three were Italians, and one was German.³⁵

Up to a few days before his death, Alexander VI, along with his son, Cesare, worked to increase his power and influence by acts such as adding the Cardinals. They both looked forward to a prolonged Pontificate.³⁶ This was not to be as they both contracted a form of malaria and the pope died within a few days.

Rodrigo Borgia's reputation as one of the worst, most immoral popes in history remains. From the simonious acts that led to his election, to his countless mistresses, to his shrewd lust for power, he richly deserved his many criticisms. Lees-Milne writes, "he was not wholly unpopular with his lenient subjects, who derived entertainment from the sight of his children involved in political intrigues, annulments, assassinations and poisonings with the apparent connivance of their indulgent parent."³⁷ Corruption prevailed throughout his papacy, and "before the breath was out of his body, his servants plundered his wardrobe and every stick of furniture in his rooms, leaving nothing but some torn fragments of tapestry nailed to the plastered walls."³⁸ What qualities Alexander VI may have possessed paled in the balance when weighted against the abominations of his time in office.

The stories of the popes following Nicholas V and including Alexander VI reflect the state of the Church at the beginning of the sixteenth century. With so much

³⁵ Most of them were men of doubtful reputation; all have paid handsomely for their elevation, some 20,000 ducati and more, so that from 120,000 to 130,000 ducati have been collected. If we add to this 64,000 ducati from the sale of the offices in the Court, and what Cardinal Miciel left behind him, we shall have a fine sum. Alexander VI is shewing to the world that the amount of a Pope's income is just what he chooses.

³⁶ Pastor, *The History of the Popes, Vol VI*, 130.

³⁷ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967), 132.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

corruption, avarice, and flagrant spending, the future of the papacy and the Church was untenable. To survive, they needed rejuvenation. This came with the election of Pope Julius II in 1503, who left as his legacy a vision for a new St. Peter's basilica, one that would inspire Christians everywhere and renew their faith in the Church.

Chapter Four: New St. Peter's – Financing the Basilica and Starting to Build

When Pope Julius II (della Rovere, r. 1503-1513) became pope two months after Alexander VI died, he rekindled Nicholas V's dream of a great church in Rome. From the time Constantine built the original St. Peter's in 325 C.E. and continuing throughout the Middle Ages, cathedrals were the center of major events, religious and political, affirming the Church and the papacy as the entity that also had temporal power—including the coronation of emperors, a symbol of the submission of the imperial power to pontifical power.¹ They were also a status symbol for a community or chapter of the Church, drawing crowds to view their relics, knowing visitors were expected to leave donations behind. In 1447, Pope Nicholas V had recognized the need for a new and grand basilica to arouse the faithful, but while Nicholas V began the project, decades had passed and his project for a new basilica was finally adopted by a pope who could make the vision a reality.² In 1503, Pope Julius II continued where Nicholas V had stopped.³ He too “aimed at embodying the religious, regal, and universal spirit of the papacy in monumental works of architecture, sculpture, and painting.”⁴ His inexhaustible energy and tireless determination empowered Julius II to begin building Nicholas V's majestic basilica, the sermon in stone that would draw Christians back to the Church.

Like all great churches and cathedrals, funding the basilica would be costly and Julius II had inherited a bankrupt Church. Julius II was practical in terms of finances and

¹ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 8.

² Other than his vision, Nicholas also began some of the work on New St. Peter's. In one year's time, he oversaw 2,500 cartloads of stone transported from the Colosseum to the construction location for New St. Peter's. Cited from James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 124.

³ Sixtus IV also did work on the Vatican, mainly with the Sistine Chapel, his namesake legacy to Rome.

⁴ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol. VI* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 457.

was determined to keep close watch on the papal coffers.⁵ Construction of a new basilica would require substantial financing, which was needed for a project that would take over a century. Fortuitously, during Julius II's reign there was "an enormous increase of wealth to princes and potentates. The discovery of the New World brought gold, silver, and diamonds from the Americas to Europe," and Julius II suddenly had plenty of revenue to begin work on New St. Peter's.⁶ With no concerns for an impending revolution such as the Reformation, Julius II moved forward with grand ideas and a vision that would require the greatest artists of the time.

Labor was very expensive and approximately forty percent of the money needed went for workers' salaries.⁷ The process of building a cathedral was long and arduous, and New St. Peter's was on a much grander scale than a medieval cathedral. In addition to labor costs, the building required stone, wood, iron, and stained glass. Architectural historian Francois Icher explains that "while the building sites depended unquestionably on the rhythm of the seasons, they operated primarily according to the rhythm of money."⁸ Given that it took so long from inception to the completion of a cathedral during the Middle Ages, it was not always easy to gain support from those who saw the building as a "veritable financial abyss" and one that would take, in some cases, their lifetime to complete.⁹ In spite of the costs and the time required to build, citizens were driven to erect these grand churches for a number of reasons, including the desire of the faithful to worship in an auspicious setting, bishops and wealthy citizens yearning for influence and

⁵ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol. VI* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 458.

⁶ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 135.

⁷ Francois Icher, *Building the Great Cathedrals* [New York: Abrams Publishing, 2001], 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

power at home and in Rome, and the wish of some to leave behind a tangible legacy. The cathedral would inspire a “feeling of confidence in the future, both spiritually and materially.”¹⁰ With these reasons in mind, the needed revenue came. When Julius II became pope in 1503, he was determined that New St. Peter’s would surpass all cathedrals in Christendom in size and grandeur, and the cost reflected that determination.

Generally when a community or bishopric made the decision to build a medieval cathedral, an association was formed or, in some cases, multiple associations.¹¹ Members of the association were expected to pay entry fees and annual membership dues.¹² This workshop committee handled the administration and financial management of the project, including finding the architect and selecting the design. A representative of the workshop committee, frequently a layperson, supervised the running of the day-to-day operations of the project. This person was called the “*magister fabricate*” (master of the workshop) or the “*magister operis*” (master of the works).¹³ In addition to the *magister fabricate*, bishops also supervised the process, including some of the costs and administration of tithes and income.¹⁴ The different public and ecclesiastical offices of the city were reflected in this organization, and as the interests of the different social classes were represented there, they often clashed.¹⁵

The building and financing of New St. Peter’s basilica was different from earlier cathedrals in that it was strictly oligarchical, with Pope Julius II directly in charge.¹⁶

Julius II was a tenacious fundraiser during his entire reign. In January 1506, he wrote to

¹⁰ Francois Icher, *Building the Great Cathedrals* [New York: Abrams Publishing, 2001], 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁵ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempfen: Te Neues, 1999], 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

Henry VII, King of England, as well as England's nobility and bishops, asking for money for construction of the basilica.¹⁷ Julius II also meticulously recorded the money he spent for the project, and he insisted on approving all expenditures directly.¹⁸

In setting up the organization and financing of the construction yard, Julius II emphasized that all decisions and charges depended on the pontiff for final approval.¹⁹ In place of an association, he established the Congregation of the Fabbrica of St. Peter's in 1506, composed of cardinals and prelates.²⁰ This group's focus was on collecting donations, including selling indulgences throughout Europe to benefit the basilica.²¹ In 1510, Julius II appointed from the Fabbrica a commission of prelates to oversee and "collect the vast sums of money needed to pay for his ambitious undertaking."²² The Fabbrica's fundraising activities included indulgence sales, overseeing donations to the basilica, and inspecting the personal finances of priests to "confiscate any money or possessions judged to have been acquired by illegal or improper means."²³ Finally, the Fabbrica oversaw the money that came to the papacy from Spain and Portugal. The money they sent was intended for crusades "to support the Church's struggle against infidels and heretics," however it generally went toward rebuilding St. Peter's.²⁴ The

¹⁷ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol. VI* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 472.

¹⁸ Payments came from just one banker - Stefano Ghinucci from Siena- and financing of the enterprise in the early years was recorded in the *Liber Mandatorum*, a small volume of eighty pages. (Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 18.)

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁰ Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter's* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 7. Fabbrica meaning "building."

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²² *Ibid.*.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter's* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 8.

contribution from Spain was about 100,000 gold scudi every six years and about three-quarters of that amount from Portugal.²⁵

In addition to the aforementioned revenue, money came a variety of other sources. Parishes throughout Europe were expected to tithe a percentage of their income to the fund, usually about ten percent.²⁶ Julius II “imposed a tribute on all ecclesiastical possessions with the payment of one-tenth destined for the construction of the basilica. He visited rulers in person to ask for money promising absolution from sins in exchange for the necessary funds to make the grandeur of the vicar of Christ architecturally visible on earth.”²⁷ Julius II was determined to find the needed funds for what he believed was a critical need for all of Christianity.²⁸

Another significant gift toward St. Peter’s came in the form of land and wealth from those dying.²⁹ In November 1505, Julius “commanded that the property left by a certain Monseratie de Guda should be set apart for building St. Peter’s.”³⁰ This edict was the first formal act that specifically directed money to the new basilica. The Fabbrica also had access to the wills of all residents of the Papal States, to ensure that they contained legacies left for religious or charitable purposes.³¹ Art historian Louise Rice explains, “a fifth part of all so-called pious legacies went directly into the coffers of the Fabbrica; furthermore, if any such pious legacy was wrongly or ambiguously worded, if the heirs failed to execute it within a year of the testator’s death, or if it involved any irregularity

²⁵ Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter’s* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁷ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter’s* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 19.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁹ Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter’s*, 8.

³⁰ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol. VI* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 472.

³¹ Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter’s*, 8.

whatsoever, the Fabbrica was free to appropriate the entire amount for its own purposes.”³² Competition was keen for the revenue from bequests, and the Church was quick to assure the dying that masses and prayers would be spoken in their memory if they would leave their willed legacies to the glory of God. Soliciting bequest money did not bode well to local churches or the mendicant orders, who relied on the same money for support.³³ This method of soliciting funds by the Fabbrica was one that caused widespread resentment toward Rome about how funds were collected.³⁴

As resources were solicited by those farther removed from the Fabbrica, control of how funds were collected became more careless. When raising funds for medieval cathedrals as well as St. Peter’s, local bishoprics enlisted the help of *questores*, or “pardoners,” to travel throughout their region with relics of martyrs and saints, exhibiting them for a fee. They spoke about the virtues and merits of having a cathedral and of its beauty.³⁵ Utilizing *questores* was a successful way of raising money, but it was difficult to track. While the proceeds of these displays purportedly ended up in the cathedral funds’ coffers, this method of raising money led to swindling. Swindlers, dressed as clergy, traveled with fake relics, collecting money that never saw its way to the cathedral fund.³⁶ However, by far, the most controversial solicitation involved a form of indulgence.

Architectural historian François Icher explains, “thieves and holders of stolen goods were promised absolution and forgiveness on condition that they give up all or part of the goods

³² Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter’s* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 8.

³³ François Icher, *Building the Great Cathedrals* [New York: Abrams Publishing, 2001], 45. The Mendicant Orders were friars who, by vow of poverty, renounced all proprietorship not only individually but also in common, relying for support on their own work and on the charity of the faithful. New Advent, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10183c.htm>.

³⁴ Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter’s*, 8.

³⁵ François Icher, *Building the Great Cathedrals* [New York: Abrams Publishing, 2001], 47.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

they held illegally not to the rightful owners, but to the Church.”³⁷ Such practices marked a clear beginning of the abuses in indulgence sales.

With the papal coffers filling, Julius II hired Michelangelo, then thirty-three years old, in 1505. Julius had seen Michelangelo’s soul-stirring *Pietà* in the Chapel of St. Petronilla in St. Peter’s, and recognized the great sculptor’s talent.³⁸ After inviting Michelangelo to return to Rome, the artist was tasked with designing and building a tomb for the pope himself.³⁹ For this he would be paid 10,000 ducati, with a monthly provision of 100 ducati and five years to complete the project. The completed plan, which gained approval by Julius II, would require a block of marble that weighed 110 tons and, when completed, would be so colossal that no church in Rome except New St. Peter’s could contain it.⁴⁰ Julius II loved the plan, and he worked well with Michelangelo. Pastor wrote, “the two understood each other, both were *terribili* in the Italian sense, great vehement souls and lovers of all great things materially and spiritually; both crowned heads, one with the diadem of Christendom, the other with that of genius.”⁴¹

Also in 1505, Julius chose Bramante to plan the rebuilding of the Vatican and New St. Peter’s. Bramante’s plan was “a commanding central dome resting on a Greek Cross, with four smaller domes in the four angles.”⁴² This new basilica, “which was to take the place of a building teeming with venerable memories, was to embody the greatness of the present and the future, and was to surpass all other churches in the world in its proportions

³⁷ Francois Icher, *Building the Great Cathedrals* [New York: Abrams Publishing, 2001], 47.

³⁸ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol. VI* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 503.

³⁹ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol. VI*, 460.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 504.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 504.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 465.

and in its splendor.”⁴³ The plan was so magnificent that Julius II knew, even though he had much money in his coffers, it would not be enough. At this point, and much to the dismay of Michelangelo, he halted work on his tomb. For Julius II, “the tomb was only for himself, whereas the magnificent basilica would be a glory for the whole Church.”⁴⁴ Michelangelo would return to Rome in 1508 to work on the Sistine Chapel and again in 1548 as chief architect of the basilica.

Donato Bramante designed the new basilica with the “symbol of the universal Christ expressed in the Greek Cross within a circle, geometrically relating a central dome to a series of lesser domes.”⁴⁵ On the pope’s authority, Bramante contracted with five master craftsmen to begin working on the basilica. They were paid “by a conventional tariff for each square foot of wall, pavement, and roof” or offered a sum for each item they produced, such as a column, capital, niche shell, or vaulting panel.⁴⁶ In turn, the master craftsmen hired artisans to do much of the actual work.⁴⁷ The first money paid out was in April 1506 to Bramante, a sum of 7,500 ducati that would go toward Bramante’s five sub-contractors.⁴⁸ Julius II insisted that all expenses be paid directly to the contractors, which meant when Bramante hired assistants, he had to pay for them from his own pocket.⁴⁹ The groundbreaking for New St. Peter’s took place on April 18, 1506 with the laying of the foundation stone. Excavation had begun and the foundation was twenty-five feet deep. Pope Julius II, resolute on laying the stone himself, “made his way, accompanied by the

⁴³ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol. VI* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 465.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 464.

⁴⁵ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter’s* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 143.

⁴⁶ An example of this comes from Pastor’s *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol. VI*, p. 482: Assistant architect, Antonio di Sangalo, received 200 ducats for preparing the centering for the arches of the cupola in Jan. 1510. He received a similar sum in November of that year for the same work.

⁴⁷ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter’s*, 147.

⁴⁸ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes, Vol. VI*, 474.

⁴⁹ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter’s* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 18.

Cardinals and Prelates and preceded by the Cross, into the excavation and laid the foundation stone of white marble.”⁵⁰ The stone bore the inscription declaring, “Pope Julius II of Liguria, in the year 1506, the third of his reign, restored this basilica, which had fallen into decay.”⁵¹ Under the stone was an earthen pot containing twelve medals with the head of Julius II stamped on one side and a representation of the new basilica on the other.⁵² After Pope Julius II blessed the stone and said a benediction and prayer, one of the cardinals announced a plenary indulgence for those who would contribute to building New St. Peter’s.⁵³

One year later, some 2,500 men were at work on the basilica, a small army, and the pope was very pleased with its progress, visiting the construction site frequently.⁵⁴ Julius II was insistent that funds be raised relentlessly for the project, and in 1510 he appointed commissioners throughout Europe to collect charitable gifts with the offering of indulgences.⁵⁵ The commissioners were quite successful as “according to a report of the Venetian Envoy, one lay-brother alone brought back from his journey 27,000 ducati.”⁵⁶ In the first year of building (1506), journal entries reflected payments of 12,500 ducati for construction costs. In the next year, 27,200 ducati were paid out. In the years immediately following, between 1508 and 1510, 42,129 ducati went toward the building’s costs.⁵⁷ In 1511, work on the basilica slowed considerably. Julius II became involved in a war with France and money he slated for the basilica went instead toward the war

⁵⁰ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol. VI* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 473.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 474.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 473.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 474.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 475.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 482.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 18.

efforts.⁵⁸ Under his watchful eye, approximately 80,000 ducati had been disbursed for the contractors and overseers of New St. Peter's.⁵⁹

Julius II died on February 21, 1513. Shortly before his death, the pope extended an indulgence bull to those who would agree to pay contributions to New St. Peter's on an annual basis.⁶⁰ At the time of his death, approximately two-thirds of old St. Peter's had been demolished and much had been built in its place.⁶¹ Of the old church, only the high altar and the tribune remained.⁶² Of the new church four great piers had been erected, each of which was more than 100 paces in circumference at the base.⁶³ These were built up as far as the pendentives and their connecting arches.⁶⁴ In addition, the arm of the choir, which reached the springer of the vault, was completed as were two piers of the central nave, sticking out of the foundations.⁶⁵ Work was also done in the papal palace, including in the garden, the Cortile Belvedere, and the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo was commissioned to paint the chapel ceiling for a sum of 6,000 ducati, an area measuring more than 10,000 square feet and taking him twenty-two months, not including interruptions, to complete.⁶⁶

Bramante outlived Julius II by one year. His intention had been "to erect a Christian temple as great or greater than the grandiosity of the ancients. New St. Peter's would be thought of as a *monumentum*, showing the historical roots of the authority of the

⁵⁸ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol. VI* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 482.

⁵⁹ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempfen: Te Neues, 1999], 18.

⁶⁰ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 146.

⁶¹ Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter's* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 17.

⁶² Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol. VI*, 483.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's*, 19.

⁶⁵ A "springer" is a stone or other solid laid at the impost of an arch.

⁶⁶ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes, Vol. VI*, 514-7. Note: this included the entire roof down to the windows and all materials used were to be supplied by the artist.

Church, the identity of faith and reason. Thus the physical remains of the ancient basilica could be sacrificed, as the new basilica would surpass the old in magnificence.⁶⁷ Through the efforts of Bramante and Julius II, Rome became “the classical city of the world, the centre of European culture, and the papacy the pioneer of civilization.”⁶⁸ Bramante’s design for the basilica and Julius II’s devotion to New St. Peter’s was unmatched, with the possible exception of Nicholas V. When Julius II died in 1513, Giovanni dé Medici was elected to the papacy and became Pope Leo X. For all the good Julius II had done for Rome, Leo X would counter it with corruption and greed. It is here, with this man and in this time, that the Church would change forever.

⁶⁷ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol. VI* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 514.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 459.

Chapter Five: Pope Leo X, Albert of Brandenburg, and Johann Tetzel – The Triumvirate that Outraged Martin Luther, and the Eventual Response of the Church

Julius II had bequeathed to Leo X a task of the greatest importance and difficulty. The project of building New St. Peter's that Julius II left behind "demanded someone other than Leo X, whose reckless extravagance and disordered finances deprived him of the means indispensable to the fulfillment of bringing progress to the basilica."¹ Leo X spent money faster than he could raise it. The grand church he intended to build as an inspiration to the faithful was costing more than he had in his coffers.

Pope Leo X came to personify the contrary impulses within the Catholic Church that nearly led to its destruction. Like his predecessors, Nicholas V and Julius II, Leo X wanted to insure that St. Peter's was built in a spectacular and soul-moving style, yet his greed, profligate spending, and self-aggrandizement—both for himself and his family—nearly ruined both the Church and the completion of St. Peter's. Leo X needed money to support the St. Peter's building program, but he also needed capital to support his personal projects. The clash between Leo X's needs led to the worst abuses of indulgences and ultimately to Martin Luther and the Reformation. Not until after the cataclysmic upheavals of the Protestant Reformation would the Church respond with a ban on indulgence sales.

Leo X needed someone to raise money to support New St. Peter's and his lifestyle. For these, he found two primary money-raisers: Albert of Mainz-Magdeburg and Johann Tetzel. Leo X, Albert, and Tetzel were successful for a time. Their methods however,

¹ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol VIII* [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950], 356.

angered many people, particularly one Augustinian monk, Martin Luther of Wittenburg, Germany.² The result was that the very church they were building to draw Christians to Rome drove many Christians away, starting a revolution and a new branch of the Christian church.

When Leo X was elected pope, he wanted a basilica with “truly colossal dimensions.”³ Construction on St. Peter’s stopped for a period while the newly-elected pope re-organized the team leading the project. He kept Bramante as chief architect and also brought in Giuliano da Sangallo, the Medici family architect, who created a stable organization for construction. However, the existing level of funding soon translated more “into salaries for collaborators than into progress on the work, and more in 'agreements' for supplies than in construction.”⁴ In addition to Giuliano, Leo X hired Fra Giocondo, and kept Antonio da Sangallo as an assistant. Antonio was very experienced with St. Peter's as he trained in the construction yard of St. Peter's, doing manual labor and gradually taking on jobs of increasing importance.⁵

In early 1514, shortly after the team was organized, Bramante died. On his death bed, he recommended that his friend and compatriot, Raphael, replace him as chief architect. Leo X welcomed the idea of the young artist Raphael because Giuliano was now seventy years old and Fra Giocondo was over eighty.⁶ Raphael was offered a yearly salary of 300 ducati for his service as co-architect-in-chief along with Fra Giocondo, who

² Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol VII* [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950], 351.

³ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 19.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol VIII*, 360.

was paid 400 ducati because of his experience.⁷ Later that same year, Fra Giocondo died, Giuliano retired to Florence, and Raphael became sole chief architect of New St. Peter's.⁸

Raphael and Leo X got along very well and met almost daily to discuss progress on St. Peter's.⁹ Raphael felt honored to be in his position and wrote to his friend Simone Ciarla, "What task can be nobler than the construction of St. Peter's? This will be the greatest building that man has ever yet seen; the cost will amount to a million in gold. The pope has ordered a payment of 60,000 ducati annually for the works and he thinks of nothing else."¹⁰ Yet little was accomplished during Raphael's six years as chief architect. Raphael wanted to change Bramante's design from a basilica shaped in the tradition of a Greek Cross to one with a longer apse, resulting in a design more like a Latin Cross, the form the basilica ultimately took. The design changes took a long time and were fraught with errors, including "a cupola too heavy for its pillars, needing more design work."¹¹ When Raphael died suddenly in 1520 at the age of 37, "only the small pillars which stand on both sides of the pillars of the dome were built to a height of about 12 meters, and the arcades of the south aisle were ceiled."¹² At fault, at least in part, was the lack of funding Leo X had promised Raphael. The pope's budget of 60,000 ducati annually depended on "the income from indulgences," and by 1520, Germany, Portugal, and Spain were all protesting against Julius II's St. Peter's indulgence bull.¹³ Several towns, including Martin Luther's home of Wittenberg in Germany, forbade the indulgence.¹⁴

⁷ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol VIII* [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950], 361.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 362.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 361.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 366.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 367.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 368.

Leo X responded to the outrage over indulgences by seeking other means to increase papal revenue. Pastor wrote, “The more meager the returns from indulgences, the more strenuous were Leo X’s exertions to raise money in other ways, including his insistence that one-half of the receipts from indulgences of other kinds should be apportioned to St. Peter’s.”¹⁵ Leo X’s efforts were not working. From every direction, “a strong reaction against the indulgence was manifested.”¹⁶ In addition to little being done on St. Peter’s, rumors spread that what money *was* coming in from the sale of the St. Peter’s indulgence, “was handed over to the pope’s sister, Maddalena,” and that the stones intended for the basilica “found their way by night to the palaces of the pope’s nephews.”¹⁷ Leo X countered those rumors, claiming his enthusiasm for New St. Peter’s took “precedence of all churches upon earth and was a guarantee for the security of the Christian religion.”¹⁸ Yet building delays continued for lack of funding, and Leo X was fast becoming “the object of a far-reaching distrust.”¹⁹ Seemingly oblivious to his critics and “with inconceivable thoughtlessness,” Leo X made no attempt to change his demands; rather, he called for a new indulgence campaign.²⁰

Instead of responding to the “angst of the German people, including clergy,” in 1514 Leo X committed “the unpardonable error of proclaiming an indulgence for the building of New St. Peter’s on an even more extensive scale than the one proclaimed by Julius II.”²¹ The Mainz-Magdeburg indulgence exemplified corruption, mainly because its foundation lay in greed. In 1514, a 24-year old Hohenzollern prince, Albert of

¹⁵ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol VIII* [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950], 368.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 369.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 370.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 328.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Brandenburg, wanted to become archbishop of two sees: Mainz and Magdeburg. Despite resistance from the Vatican, however, Albert “succeeded in securing the financial assistance of the Fugger bank, whose branch office transacted much ecclesiastical business, including the entire indulgence traffic between the empire and the Holy See.”²² After lengthy negotiations with Leo X and the cardinals in Rome, Albert was made Archbishop of Mainz-Magdeburg in Germany and “entrusted with the St. Peter’s indulgence” for those bishoprics plus the diocese of Halberstadt.²³ Half of the revenue from the indulgence went toward St. Peter’s and the other half was used to pay for Albert’s bishopric fees.²⁴

Albert also appointed himself indulgence commissioner and compiled a team of sub-commissioners and salesmen. The salesmen were experienced preachers who “commanded a high percentage of the take and were accompanied by their own retinue of assistants, including servants.”²⁵ They arrived in towns “with the hoopla of a traveling circus.” According to author Charles Mee:

The front men went out ahead with the message “The grace of God and of the Holy Father is at your gates,” and the town’s church bells rang and priests and nuns led the welcoming procession with their lighted candles to the edge of town. There they met the preacher and his retinue and escorted him to the church. Leading the way was the papal bull of the day, held aloft on a velvet cushion, and the people sang and chanted and prayed through the town. Then at the altar the large red cross was set up and the pope’s coat of arms was suspended from it, and the preacher mounted the pulpit and opened his pitch.²⁶

²² Reinhold Kiermayr, “How much money was actually in the indulgence chest?” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 17 (3) [Autumn 1986]: 307.

²³ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol VII* [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950], 330.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Charles L. Mee, Jr., *White Robe, Black Robe* [New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons], 177.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 178.

The most famous, some might say notorious, of the salesmen, was Johann Tetzel, a seventy-three year old

Dominican who had been an indulgence salesman since 1502.²⁷

Tetzel entered the service of Albert in 1516. He was paid “80 ducati monthly, had an unlimited expense account, and received ‘by gains,’ which were



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similar to a commission and that exceeded his salary considerably.”²⁸ In January 1517, Tetzel arrived in Jutterbog, near Luther’s town, Wittenberg, to preach his indulgences.²⁹ There Tetzel garnered Martin Luther’s attention.³⁰ The hard-sale methods used to market the Mainz-Magdeburg indulgence, and the hawkers preying on the innocent and simple-minded citizens, enraged Martin Luther, who firmly believed that faith, not indulgences, would ensure one’s entry into heaven.

Tetzel also broke from papal authority and was granting indulgences for the dead.³¹ Tetzel espoused that an indulgence could be purchased for a relative in Purgatory. Tetzel famously said, "As soon as pennies in the money chest ring, the souls out of their Purgatory do spring," touching “a chord with many who had loved ones who were

²⁷ Charles L. Mee, Jr., *White Robe, Black Robe* [New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons], 179.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol VII* [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950], 346.

³⁰ See Appendix G for one of Tetzel’s sermons.

³¹ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes, Vol VII*, 349.

deceased.”³² In addition, Tetzel's sales pitch implied that the buyer was also freed from the sin as well as the penance attached to it. According to Pastor, “Tetzel was prone to exaggerations, and was wanting in modesty and simplicity. His manner was arrogant and pretentious, and he carried out the duties of his office in such a business-like way that scandals could not fail to arise.”³³ Luther recognized the indulgence Tetzel was selling was not "a document of Christian piety, creating a means to salvation, but solely as a business venture.”³⁴ While Luther was angry over the method of indulgence sales, he was more angry with Albert and the pope for allowing these practices than he was with Tetzel.³⁵

Luther voiced his objections to the sale of indulgences in his letter to Albert in 1517. Luther's letter was polite, almost obsequious, but to the point. Luther argued that the public sale of indulgences was an abuse of the Christian religion and one that Luther would not allow without protest.³⁶ Indulgence hawkers were taking advantage of the simple, naïve people, and Luther was driven “to take a strong stance - perhaps one stronger than he wished. There was little room for tolerance of him speaking out and he was forced to take an extreme position.”³⁷ This extreme position took the form of posting his *Ninety-five Theses* on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, challenging the Catholic Church and the Pope.

³² Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol VII* [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950], 349.

³³ *Ibid.*, 350.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 308.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 351.

³⁶ Olin, John C., James D. Smart, and Robert E. McNally. "Luther, Erasmus, and the Reformation: A Catholic-Protestant Reappraisal." *Renaissance Quarterly* [1970]: 453-54.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* "could not fail to stir up the people against the authority of the Church."³⁸ While no one responded that day, the Theses quickly "printed en masse and distributed about the country."³⁹ Germans reacted by declaring that the "support of the poor by almsgiving was more meritorious than the gaining of indulgences."⁴⁰ The people supported Martin Luther, and he "took his place at the head of a national religious revolt, which he carried until a large portion of the German people separated themselves from the center of the unity of the Church."⁴¹ Eventually, "the economic impact of the indulgence campaign came close to negligible" as a result of Luther's *Ninety-five Theses*.⁴² Many have pointed to indulgences as the root cause that led to Luther's protest and the resulting Reformation. However, it was the abuse of indulgences, motivated by greed, which truly catalyzed the Reformation. Martin Luther was not opposed to indulgences per se, it was the avarice behind them during that time that riled him. Luther's eighty-second thesis states, "They ask, e.g.: Why does not the pope liberate everyone from purgatory for the sake of love (a most holy thing) and because of the supreme necessity of their souls? This would be morally the best of all reasons. Meanwhile he redeems innumerable souls for money, a most perishable thing, with which to build St. Peter's church, a very minor purpose."⁴³ Luther's primary motivators were the greed inherent in the indulgence sales and the preying on the innocent by the indulgence hawkers.

³⁸ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol VII* [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950], 352.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 359.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Reinhold Kiermayr, "How much money was actually in the indulgence chest?" *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 17 (3) [Autumn 1986]: 317.

⁴³ Martin Luther, "Luther's 95 Theses." The Spurgeon Archive.
<http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/95theses.htm> (accessed April 22, 2011).

Martin Luther and the Reformation caused a major setback in the goals of the Catholic Church in the early sixteenth century. Luther did not intend to leave the Church. He wanted to resolve the abuses within the Church by replacing the doctrine of good works, such as indulgences, with his belief that faith alone was the means of receiving God's grace. The German people embraced Luther's beliefs, and the Reformation spread throughout Europe. New St. Peter's Basilica was intended to address and incorporate into the Church the humanist trends of the Renaissance and draw people back to a more sacred life. Corruption in Rome, however, had angered so many that what was intended to entice Christians to Rome was instead pushing them farther away, and it appeared the Church might not recover. Historian Bruno Contardi expressed the sentiment well in when he wrote, "the controversy over the luxury and corruption of the Roman clergy, over the veneration of relics, and the cult of the saints as mediators in salvation and over the supremacy of the pope were great weapons for the spread of Protestantism."⁴⁴ Ten years after Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* were posted, however, the Sack of Rome in 1527 caused the pendulum to swing back in the Catholic Church's favor.

The Sack of Rome by 34,000 soldiers of the Holy Roman Empire brought Rome and the Vatican to its knees. Fueled by Luther's outrage with the papacy and looking for a direction to express their anger over lack of wages, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V's army mutinied and headed to Rome. They attacked in early May, and the emperor's henchman, Charles III, Duke of Bourbon, was killed shortly after they arrived, leaving the army without order or restraint.⁴⁵ They pillaged the city and the Vatican, melted down treasures, violated and sold nuns to the brothels, and sacked churches, monasteries, and

⁴⁴ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 22.

⁴⁵ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 157.

the homes of the wealthy.⁴⁶ In addition, the Sack destroyed “the building accounts relating to the new basilica. The actual tomb of St. Peter was, however, untouched.”⁴⁷

Through a secret tunnel, Pope Clement VII escaped to Castel Sant'Angelo, where he stayed for several months before paying a bribe to the Imperial soldiers for his life.⁴⁸ An estimated six to ten thousand Romans died in the Sack and two-thirds of Rome’s buildings were destroyed.⁴⁹ The pillaging of Rome in 1527 gave the death-blow to Italian humanism, humbled the faithful and reignited their determination to strengthen the Catholic Church.⁵⁰

During the period between the Sack of Rome and the Council of Trent, work ensued to rebuild Rome and New St. Peter’s. A few years after the Sack, and once “amends were made between the pope and the emperor,” Clement VII called on Sangallo to scale down Raphael's basilica plans and begin working on St. Peter’s again.⁵¹ The pope also called on Baldassare Peruzzi to assist Sangallo in starting the reconstruction work.⁵² Pope Paul III (Farnese, r. 1534-1549) offered Peruzzi equal pay to Sangallo's, and both men were charged with coming up with a clear plan, along with a large wooden model, of the basilica. Peruzzi died in 1536, leaving Sangallo to complete the task.⁵³ The model was build by carpenter-architect Labacco and took seven years to construct. The cost equaled the price of a small church. The model was Sangallo's "greatest project and his

⁴⁶ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967] 157.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Löffler, Klemens. "Humanism." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 7. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. 18 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07538b.htm>>.

⁵¹ R. A. Scotti, *Basilica The Sendor and Scandal: Building St. Peter's* [New York, Penguin Group, 2007], 183.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 23.

spiritual legacy."⁵⁴ Sangallo died unexpectedly in August 1546, just after completion and payment for the model. In November 1546, Paul III appointed Michelangelo architect of St. Peter's.

Michelangelo, now 72, accepted the appointment reluctantly. He regarded his call to the position as one "from the Almighty, a penitential discipline to be endured with the best grace possible."⁵⁵ His conditions were clear: he would not consult with anyone except for the pope directly, he claimed sole responsibility for the direction of the work, there was to be no fraud or theft in the construction yard, and he would personally oversee approval of construction materials.⁵⁶ In addition, he refused any salary for his work other than the fifty scudi a month he was receiving as advisor at the Vatican Palace.⁵⁷ His undertaking would be "only for the love of God and in honour of the Apostle Peter."⁵⁸ Michelangelo's growing passion for St. Peter's grew, and he had a positive effect on those who worked alongside him. He rid the construction yard of many of the abuses and "instilled the basilican workmen with a fresh enthusiasm and zest for the great and holy task ahead of them."⁵⁹ He shared in letters that "he looked upon the work at St. Peter's as the crowning achievement of his life."⁶⁰ From a letter to his friend, Giorgio Vasari, in 1557, he writes, "I believe...that God entrusted me with this labour."⁶¹ Michelangelo, along with Bramante and Raphael, and later Bernini, did for New St. Peter's what Nicholas V and Julius II envisioned the basilica would do for the Church. He poured all of his greatest talents and gifts into creating a beautiful, inspiring church. Michelangelo

⁵⁴ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 23.

⁵⁵ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 167.

⁵⁶ Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's*, 26.

⁵⁷ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's*, 167.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

considered Bramante's design brilliant, and gave him great credit when he was chief architect of New St. Peter's. Bruno Contardi eloquently expressed that "the basilica imagined by Julius II and conceived of by Bramante would be defined much later by Michelangelo as "*chiara e schietta, luminosa e isolata a torno*" (clear and pure, luminous and isolated on all sides)."⁶² At Michelangelo's death in February 1564, the foundations for the corner chapels had been dug, the drum of the dome was near completion, and the north and south transeptal arms were almost finished.⁶³ Lee-Milne writes, "the exterior of the basilica as seen from the sides and especially from the rear is Michelangelo's main contribution to St. Peter's."⁶⁴ Under Michelangelo's guidance as chief architect, New St. Peter's began its true rise to grandeur. The basilica was ultimately a cause that Catholics could support as a representation of all that was and is good in their Church. It took having it nearly taken away by papal corruption and the Sack of Rome to come to this realization.

In December, 1545, Paul III convened the Council of Trent, an event that spanned eighteen years and marked the beginning of what became known as the Counter Reformation. The Council was given the task to "revitalize and renew the Church and transform it from its medieval ways into a modern Church."⁶⁵ Paul III sought to "speedily and happily restore what is good, to rectify bad morals, and to restore Christian morality and reunion of all Christian people."⁶⁶ The matter of indulgence sales would wait until the twenty-fifth and final session of the Council of Trent (in December 1563) for resolution.⁶⁷

⁶² Aurelio Amendola, and Bruno Contardi. *St. Peter's* [Kempen: Te Neues, 1999], 12.

⁶³ James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 190.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Robert E. McNally, "The Council of Trent, the Spiritual Exercises and the Catholic Reform." *Church History* 34 [March 1965]: 36.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ See Appendix H

In the *Decree Concerning Indulgences*, holy indulgences were retained by the Church, however any and all abuse or corruption that accompanied them was abolished. Four years later, in 1567, Pope Pius V canceled all grants of indulgences involving fees or any other financial transactions.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ William Kent, "Indulgences. In The Catholic Encyclopedia," New Advent, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm> [accessed January 15, 2011].

Conclusion

During its 120-year construction, twenty-eight popes, numerous architects and artists, and thousands of workers participated in the development and construction of St. Peter's Basilica. Wars, corruption, and scandal ran parallel to great vision, artistic genius, and a determination by many to see it completed. In the end, and in spite of the avarice that permeated several decades of its construction, Rome and the Church had a basilica with "the ability to inspire awe—to make the heart stop and the soul soar—with art triumphing over politics."¹ New St. Peter's is an astounding feat of architecture, engineering, and artisanship and arguably the most beautiful structure in the world. It inspires believers and non-believers alike with its splendor and draws thousands of people daily through its doors. New St. Peter's did everything Nicholas V and Julius II hoped it would do: it brought—and continues to bring—the faithful to Church.

In addition to the blood, sweat, and tears that went into the physical building of New St. Peter's, Christians all over Europe sacrificed financially to advance the completion of the structure. The role indulgences played in its development nearly led to its demise. Historian Lees-Milne writes, "One of the ironies of history is that the means devised to finance the building of a great shrine over the tomb of the first pope should have done much to destroy the authority of his successors."² The abuse of indulgence sales was a scourge on the Catholic Church, and one that led to outrage among the faithful, mainly by Martin Luther. Ludwig von Pastor described Martin Luther as "contributing more than any other to the subversion of existing conditions in the Church,

¹ R. A. Scotti, *Basilica The Splendor and Scandal: Building St. Peter's* [New York, Penguin Group, 2007], 268.

² James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967], 146.

though, as a matter of fact, Luther only put the match to the inflammable heap which had been accumulating for centuries.”³ For those who were seduced away from the Church by the allure of the Renaissance and the secular aspects of humanism, Luther’s protestations offered an alternative ideology and the Protestant Church was born.

New St. Peter’s was built in part at the expense of many innocent people who bought indulgences on empty promises and lies. While the abuse of indulgences may have been the last straw on the tottering back of the Catholic Church, indulgences not only sparked the Reformation but also the construction of magnificent tangible edifices of the Church, the greatest of which was St. Peter’s. In the end, Nikolaus Paulus expressed it well, “Those who know how to speak only of the pernicious consequences of indulgences ought at least to remember that indulgences have contributed very largely to making possible the building and support of numerous churches. Since from a cultural standpoint these churches have poured forth immeasurable blessings upon Christian peoples, one must attribute to indulgences a share in this prosperous activity.”⁴

Indulgence sales, in spite of their abuses, left their mark on history in a positive way. Historian Henry Lea shared Paulus’ opinion, writing “the stately structures in which the devotion of our fathers displayed itself could scarce have been erected save through the means supplied by the sale of pardons, and the arts, which found in the Church their most munificent patron, were thus stimulated to a development earlier and greater than could have taken place without such adventitious assistance.”⁵ With the enormous help of

³ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages Vol VII* [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950], 292.

⁴ Nikolaus Paulus and J. Elliot Ross. *Indulgences as a social factor in the middle ages* [New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1922], 35.

⁵ Henry Charles Lea, LL.D, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church, Volume III* [New York: Greenwood Press, 1968], 581.

indulgences, New St. Peter's brought together the greatest visionaries, artists, and architects—possibly of all time—to build the greatest basilica to the glory of God.

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Appendix A: INDULGENCES (from the Code of Canon Law)¹

Can. 992 An indulgence is the remission before God of temporal punishment for sins whose guilt is already forgiven, which a properly disposed member of the Christian faithful gains under certain and defined conditions by the assistance of the Church which as minister of redemption dispenses and applies authoritatively the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.

Can. 993 An indulgence is partial or plenary insofar as it partially or totally frees from the temporal punishment due to sins.

Can. 994 Any member of the faithful can gain partial or plenary indulgences for oneself or apply them to the dead by way of suffrage.

Can. 995 §1. In addition to the supreme authority of the Church, only those to whom this power is acknowledged in the law or granted by the Roman Pontiff can bestow indulgences.

§2. No authority below the Roman Pontiff can entrust the power of granting indulgences to others unless the Apostolic See has given this expressly to the person.

Can. 996 §1. To be capable of gaining indulgences, a person must be baptized, not excommunicated, and in the state of grace at least at the end of the prescribed works.

§2. To gain indulgences, however, a capable subject must have at least the general intention of acquiring them and must fulfill the enjoined works in the established time and the proper method, according to the tenor of the grant.

Can. 997 As regards the granting and use of indulgences, the other prescripts contained in the special laws of the Church must also be observed.

¹ Libreria Editrice Vaticana, "Code of Canon Law," Vatican Library, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/___P3I.HTM

Appendix B: Index of the Popes from Nicholas V to Urban VIII

Place in Succession	Name	Period as Pope	Baptised Name	Notes
205	Nicholas V	6 Mar. 1447 – 24 Mar. 1455	Tommaso Parentucelli	
206	Callistus III	8 Apr. 145 – 6 Aug. 1458	Alfonso Borgia	
207	Pius II	19 Aug. 1458 – 15 Aug. 1464	Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini	
208	Paul II	30 Aug. 1464 – 26 July 1471	Pietro Barbo	
209	Sixtus IV	9 Aug. 1471 – 12 Aug. 1484	Francesco della Rovere	
210	Innocent VIII	29 Aug. 1484 – 25 July 1492	Giovanni Battista Cibo	
211	Alexander VI	11 Aug. 1492 – 18 Aug. 1503	Roderigo de Borgia	Fathered Cesare Borgia with his mistress when he was a cardinal.
212	Pius III	22 Sept. – 18 Oct. 1503	Francesco Todeschini	
213	Julius II	1 Nov. 1503 – 21 Feb. 1513	Giuliano della Rovere	
214	Leo X	11 Mar. 1513 – 1 Dec. 1521	Giovanni de' Medici	
215	Hadrian VI	9 Jan. 1522 – 14 Sept. 1523	Adrian Dedel	
216	Clement VII	18 Nov. 1523 – 25 Sept. 1534	Giulio de' Medici	
217	Paul III	13 Oct. 1534 – 10 Nov. 1549	Alessandro Farnese	
218	Julius III	8 Feb. 1550 – 23 Mar. 1555	Giovanni del Monte	
219	Marcellus II	9 Apr. – 1 May 1555	Marcello Cervini	
220	Paul IV	23 May 1555 – 18 Aug. 1559	Giovanni Pietro Caraffa	
221	Pius IV	25 Dec. 1559 – 9 Dec. 1565	Giovanni Angelo Medici	
222	St. Pius V	8 Jan. 1566 – 1 May 1572	Michele Ghislieri	
223	Gregory XIII	14 May 1572 – 10 Apr. 1585	Ugo Buoncompagni	
224	Sixtus V	24 Apr. 1585 –	Felice Peretti	

Appendix B: Index of the Popes from Nicholas V to Urban VIII 71

Place in Succession	Name	Period as Pope	Baptised Name	Notes
		27 Aug. 1590		
225	Urban VII	15 – 27 Sept. 1590	Giambattista Castagna	
226	Gregory XIV	5 Dec. 1590 – 16 Oct. 1591	Nicolo[2] Sfondrati	
227	Innocent IX	29 Oct. – 30 Dec. 1591	Giovanni Antonio Fachinetti	
228	Clement VIII	30 Jan. 1592 – 5 Mar. 1605	Ippolito Aldobrandini	
229	Leo XI	1 – 27 Apr. 1605	Alessandro de' Medici	
230	Paul V	16 May 1605 – 28 Jan. 1621	Camillo Borghese	
231	Gregory XV	9 Feb. 1621 – 8 July 1623	Alessandro Ludovisi	
232	Urban VIII	6 Aug. 1623 – 29 July 1644	Maffeo Barberini	

28 Popes from the initial plan of Nicholas V to the consecration of St. Peter's Basilica in 1626.

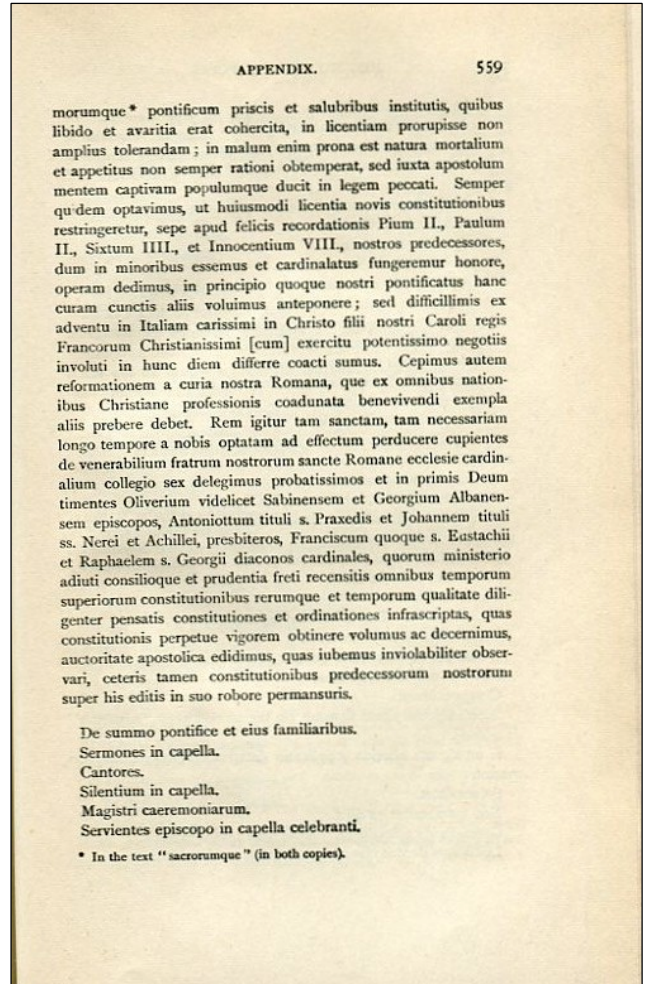
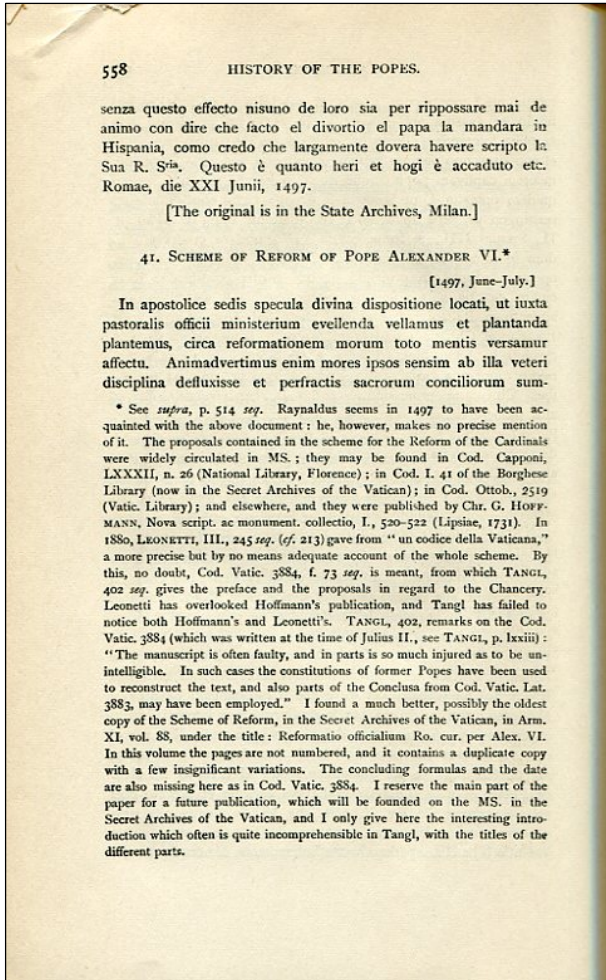
Construction began on April 18, 1506 and was completed on November 18, 1626

Appendix C: Specifications of New St. Peter's

- Cost of construction of the basilica = 46,800,052 ducati¹
- Geographic orientation = chancel west, nave east
- Capacity = 60,000
- Total length = 730 feet (220 m)
- Total width = 500 feet (150 m)
- Interior length incl. vestibule = 693.8 feet (211.5 m), more than 1/8 mile.
- Length of the transepts in interior = 451 feet (137 m)
- Width of nave = 90.2 feet (27.5 m)
- Width at the tribune = 78.7 feet (24.0 m)
- Internal width at transepts = 451 feet (137 m)
- Internal height of nave = 151.5 feet (46.2 m) high¹
- Total area = 227,070 square feet (21,095 m²), more than 5 acres (20,000 m²).
- Internal area = 163,182.2 square feet (3.75 acres; 15,160.12 m²)
- Height from pavement to top of cross = 452 feet (138 m)
- Façade = 167 feet (51 m) high by 375 feet (114 m) wide
- Vestibule = 232.9 feet (71.0 m) feet wide, 44.2 feet (13.5 m) deep, and 91.8 feet (28.0 m) high
- The internal columns and pilasters = 92 feet (28 m) tall
- The circumference of the central piers = 240 feet (73 m)
- Outer diameter of dome = 137.7 feet (42.0 m)
- The drum of the dome = 630 feet (190 m) in circumference and 65.6 feet (20.0 m) high, rising to 240 feet (73 m) from the ground
- The lantern = 63 feet (19 m) high
- The ball and cross = 8 and 16 feet (2.4 and 4.9 m), respectively
- St. Peter's Square = 1,115 feet (340 m) long, 787.3 feet (240.0 m) wide¹
- Each arm of the colonnade = 306 feet (93 m) long, and 64 feet (20 m) high
- The colonnades have 248 columns, 88 pilasters, and 140 statues¹
- Obelisk = 83.6 feet (25.5 m). Total height with base and cross, 132 feet (40 m).
- Weight of obelisk = 360.2 short tons (326,800 kg; 720,400 lb)

¹ R. A. Scotti, *Basilica The Splendor and Scandal: Building St. Peter's* [New York, Penguin Group, 2007], 241.

Appendix D – Scheme of Reform of Pope Alexander VI



De honestate cantorum.
 Contra magistrum capellae negligentem.
 Censor supra palatinos et monitio ad ipsos.
 De relationibus consistorialibus pro provisionibus ecclesiarum.
 Invocatio Eugenianae et Paulinae contra simoniacos.
 Reservationes non dentur.
 Coadjutoriae non dentur.
 Papa non alienet bona ecclesiae.
 De gubernatoribus et castellanis terrarum et arcium ecclesiae.
 Pro ecclesiarum provisionibus nihil promittatur principibus.
 Episcopus neque privetur neque transferatur contra iura.
 De cardinalibus et eorum redditibus.
 Dimittant terras et arces ecclesiae.
 Invocatio constitutionum Egidii in terris ecclesiae.
 Legati resideant et sint biennales.
 In conclavi nulla corruptio.
 Cardinalis domino temporali veresimiliter affecto non det pro eo votum.
 Ludus et venatio cessent.
 Familiares LXXX, equitaturae XXX.
 Propinae cardinalibus honestae [in the second copy "propinae pro Card. honestae"].
 Musici, histriones, adolescentes procul.
 Cardinales stent in curia.
 Funus cardinalis.
 De secretariis. Brevia habeant signaturam in gravibus.
 Secretariorum taxa moderata.
 Bullae per cameram non passim expediantur.
 Datarius non fiat ante data.
 Compositiones.
 Supplicationes simul signatae [in the second copy "mittantur" is added].
 Si est signata alterius supplicatio datarius et referendarius non petant.
 Solum datet.
 Non extrahantur ex filia.
 Generalia de officialibus. Nihil ultra taxam exigatur.
 Laicis non dentur officia rem divinam concernentia.

Officia rem divinam concernentia [in the second copy "non vendantur" is added].
 Officiae palatii testificentur libere.
 Officia inutilia.
 Gubernator.
 Auditor camerae.
 Ordinationes in curia.
 Notarius ordinantis.
 Ordinandus.
 Supplicationes ordinandorum.
 Fabrica basilice principis apost.
 Non passim absolvendos violatores ecclesiae libertatis.
 Expectativae.
 Reservationes superius dictae contra episcopos desertores.
 Contra concubinos.
 Bona naufragii nemo occupet.
 Annona urbis copiosa.
 Contra extractions frumentarias.
 Religiones.
 Contra apostatas.
 Graduationes de licentia.
 Professio infantium nulla.
 Cardinalis non sit consiliarius principum.
 Oratores annales.
 Officiae non sit oratores.
 Decimae principibus non concedendae.
 Paenae juris in premissis salva.
 Regulae signaturae gratiae.
 Ad incompatibilia et uniones.
 Commenda.
 Monasteria.
 Uniones perpetuae.
 Derogatio juris patronatus.
 Regulae immobiles.
 Testamenta pia non mutantur.
 Stent requisita a fundatoribus.
 Fructus in absentia.
 Cum illegitimi. [Cum illegitimis scil. filiis presbyterorum et aliis illegitime natis nunquam dispensetur nisi. . .]
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Nulli detur altare portatile nisi sit qualificatus et tunc per bullam.
 Facultas absolventi in casibus episcopis reservatis omnibus firmiter denegetur.
 Pensiones.
 Monasteria non extinguantur.
 Observantia non sit coacta.
 Pro volentibus apostatare nihil detur, neque * monialibus claustrum horrentibus.
 Gratificatio nulli neque regressus.
 Coadjutoriae.
 Regulae signaturae justitiae.
 Commissiones beneficiales Rota tantum.
 Commissio rejecta non reproponatur.
 Extra signaturam non porrigantur papae commissiones.
 Quatenus tollatur jus quesitum.
 Proemium cancellariae cum membris suis.
 Constitutionum innovatio.
 Exordium ad X. additiones Alexandri VI.
 Innovatio constitutionum rotae.
 De auditoribus qui vel patres sunt vel fratrem seu patrem habentibus.
 Per episcopatum desinat esse auditor.
 Auditores non sint oratores.
 Favoribus non assumantur [scil. auditores]
 Stipendia auditoribus.
 Non tarda subscriptio neque propinae inhonestae.
 Registra custodiantur.
 Registra non edantur, scribant notarii.
 Stent auditores domi.
 Commendationes potentum postergent.
 Auditores non litigent.
 Contra rapinas notariorum et eos qui causas venantur.
 Merces tabelliorum moderata.
 Scribant per se ipsos notarii.
 Juramentum paupertatis.
 Notarii Rotae resideant.
 Non paciscantur pro quota litis emendo causas.
 * At "neque," a new heading.

Sine licentia Rotae nullus in ea procuret.
 Registrum Supplicationum.
 Additiones Alexandri VI.
 De officio custodis cancellariae.
 Corrector cancellariae.
 Protonotarii participantes.
 Abbreviatores de prima visione.
 Abbreviatores de parco maiori.
 Scriptores cancellariae.
 Sollicitatores.
 Magistri registri bullarum.
 Magistri plumbi.
 Barbati.
 Secretarii cardinalium et vice-cancellarii.
 Conservator constitutionum cancellariae.
 Poenitentaria.

[Secret Archives of the Vatican.]

Appendix E: The Value of a Ducat

What would the cost would be to build New St. Peter's today? Given inflation and currency changes, it is nearly impossible to provide an accurate guess. However, below is one source that may help the reader understand what the value was of a ducat.

Author Charles Mee offers this information:

It is said that Leo spent a million ducati on the 'war' of Urbino, and it is useful to recall what a ducat was worth in his time. Reuchlin paid one ducat an hour in Rome for tutoring in Hebrew. Fifty or 100 ducati could buy a painting by Botticelli. A man could live moderately well for a year on 200 ducati. Leo's average expenditures in the course of a year amounted to nearly 600,000 ducati. Balanced against these expenditures was an income of some 420,000 ducati a year, which produced a lamentable deficit which Leo worried about from time to time. Leo's budget can be contrasted with that of Sixtus IV, whose income during his reign from 1471 to 1484 was about 290,000 ducati. Both popes had to rely for income on alum mine concessions, the salt monopoly, grain export licenses, rents, tithes, and tributes from the papal states, and the datary, money from the sale of venal offices and indulgences. In Sixtus' day, the datary contributed only 40,000 ducati to the treasury. But in order to make up for his increased expenses, Leo required 144,000 ducati from the datary—three and a half times what Sixtus thought he could squeeze out. Like most Europeans, Leo had come to rely far too much on indulgences.¹

Another source of information came from the website "1632 Money" by Francis Turner, who writes:

In addition to the mish mash of national currencies, there were two international currencies, a gold one and a silver one with a fairly well defined rate of exchange between them. These were struck to a generally consistent weight by numerous states and coins from different states were thus generally interchangeable. The gold

¹ Charles L. Mee, Jr., *White Robe, Black Robe* [New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons], 176..

coin was the Venetian ducat, introduced in 1284, contained just over 3.5 grams of gold and was the first international coin. It was so successful that it was minted under different names by many European nations. In northern Europe it was called the Guilder or Gulden and it had a variety of other names such as the Florentine or Rhenish Florin, the Forint (Hungary) or the Scudo (Milan). The silver one was the Thaler (tallero, dollar, daler etc.) which was (supposed to be) a fixed weight of silver and was the equivalent in value to two of the golden ducati. The name thaler (from *thal*, "valley") originally came from the coins minted from the silver from a rich mine at Joachimsthal (St. Joachim's Valley, Czech: Jáchymov) in Bohemia, then part of the Habsburg Empire. It was also the equivalent of the Spanish peso ("heavy"), also known as the piece of eight because it was worth 8 reales, which was a silver coin minted by Spain since 1497.

The 2 gulden to a thaler rule was usually correct but both the gulden and the thaler of the time suffered from clipping and debasement so actual physical coins had to be weighed and ones with an unusual design would need to be assayed to check for lack of debasement. The amount of pure silver in a thaler was approximately an ounce (28 grams) but varied between 25 and 30 grams.²

² Francis Turner, *Money and Exchange Rates in 1632*, <http://1632.org/1632Slush/1632money.rtf> [30 Jan. 2011].

Appendix F: The Text of a Sermon on Indulgences by Johann Tetzel

What are you thinking about? Why do you hesitate to convert yourself? Why don't you have fears about your sins? Why don't you confess now to the vicars of our Most Holy Pope? Don't you have the example of Lawrence, who, compelled by the love of God, gave away his inheritance and suffered his body to be burned? Why do you not take the example of Bartholomew, Stephen, and of other saints who gladly suffered the most gruesome deaths for the sake and salvation of their souls? You, however, do not give up great treasures; indeed you give not even a moderate alms. They gave their bodies to be martyred, but you delight in living well and joyfully. You priest, nobleman, merchant, wife, virgin, you married people, young person, old man, enter into your church which is for you, as I have said, St. Peter's, and visit the most holy Cross. It has been placed there for you, and it always cries and calls for you. Are you perhaps ashamed to visit the Cross with a candle and yet not ashamed to visit a tavern? Are you ashamed to go to the apostolic confessors, but not ashamed to go to a dance? Behold, you are on the raging sea of the world in storm and danger, not knowing if you will safely reach the harbor of salvation. Do you not know that everything which man has hangs on a thin thread and that all of life is but a struggle on earth? Let us then fight, as did Lawrence and the other saints, for the day it is well, but ill tomorrow. Today alive and tomorrow dead.

You should know that all who confess and in penance put alms into the coffer according to the counsel of the confessor, will obtain complete remission of all their sins. If they visit, after confession and after the Jubilee, the Cross and the altar every day they will receive that indulgence which would be theirs upon visiting in St. Peter's the seven altars, where complete indulgence is offered. Why are you then standing there? Run for the salvation of your souls! Be as careful and concerned for the salvation of your souls as you are for your temporal goods, which you seek both day and night. Seek the Lord while he may be found and while he is near. Work, as St. John says, while it is yet day, for the night comes when no man can work.

Don't you hear the voices of your wailing dead parents and others who say, 'Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, because we are in severe punishment and pain. From this you could redeem us with a small alms and yet you do not want to do so.' Open your ears as the father says to the son and the mother to the daughter . . . , 'We have created you, fed you, cared for you, and left you our temporal goods. Why then are you so cruel and harsh that you do not want to save us, though it only takes a little? You let us lie in flames so that we only slowly come to the promised glory.' You may have letters which let you have, once in life and in the hour of death . . . full remission of the punishment which belongs to sin. Oh, those of you with vows, you usurers, robbers, murderers, and criminals - Now is the time to hear the voice of God. He does not want the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. Convert yourselves then, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, to the Lord, thy God. Oh, you blasphemers, gossipers, who hinder this work openly or secretly, what about your affairs? You are outside the fellowship of the Church. No masses, no sermons, prayers, sacraments, or intercession help you. No field, vineyard, trees, or cattle bring fruit or wine for you. Even spiritual things vanish, as many an illustration could point out. Convert yourself with all you heart and use the medicine of which the Book of Wisdom says, 'The Most High has made medicine out of the earth and a wise man will not reject it.'¹

¹ Hans J. Hillerbrand, *The Protestant Reformation* [New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1968], 19-21.

Appendix G: Martin Luther’s Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences, commonly known as the Ninety-five Theses¹



ut of love and concern for the truth, and with the object of eliciting it, the following heads will be the subject of a public discussion at Wittenberg under the presidency of the reverend father, Martin Luther, Augustinian, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, and duly appointed Lecturer on these subjects in that place. He requests that whoever cannot be present personally to debate the matter orally will do so in absence in writing.

1. When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said "Repent", He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.
2. The word cannot be properly understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, i.e. confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.
3. Yet its meaning is not restricted to repentance in one's heart; for such repentance is null unless it produces outward signs in various mortifications of the flesh.
4. As long as hatred of self abides (i.e. true inward repentance) the penalty of sin abides, viz., until we enter the kingdom of heaven.
5. The pope has neither the will nor the power to remit any penalties beyond those imposed either at his own discretion or by canon law.
6. The pope himself cannot remit guilt, but only declare and confirm that it has been remitted by God; or, at most, he can remit it in cases reserved to his discretion. Except for these cases, the guilt remains untouched.
7. God never remits guilt to anyone without, at the same time, making him humbly submissive to the priest, His representative.

¹ Dr. Martin Luther, "Luther's 95 Theses." The Spurgeon Archive.
<http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/95theses.htm> (accessed April 22, 2011).

8. The penitential canons apply only to men who are still alive, and, according to the canons themselves, none applies to the dead.
9. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit, acting in the person of the pope, manifests grace to us, by the fact that the papal regulations always cease to apply at death, or in any hard case.
10. It is a wrongful act, due to ignorance, when priests retain the canonical penalties on the dead in purgatory.
11. When canonical penalties were changed and made to apply to purgatory, surely it would seem that tares were sown while the bishops were asleep.
12. In former days, the canonical penalties were imposed, not after, but before absolution was pronounced; and were intended to be tests of true contrition.
13. Death puts an end to all the claims of the Church; even the dying are already dead to the canon laws, and are no longer bound by them.
14. Defective piety or love in a dying person is necessarily accompanied by great fear, which is greatest where the piety or love is least.
15. This fear or horror is sufficient in itself, whatever else might be said, to constitute the pain of purgatory, since it approaches very closely to the horror of despair.
16. There seems to be the same difference between hell, purgatory, and heaven as between despair, uncertainty, and assurance.
17. Of a truth, the pains of souls in purgatory ought to be abated, and charity ought to be proportionately increased.
18. Moreover, it does not seem proved, on any grounds of reason or Scripture, that these souls are outside the state of merit, or unable to grow in grace.
19. Nor does it seem proved to be always the case that they are certain and assured of salvation, even if we are very certain ourselves.
20. Therefore the pope, in speaking of the plenary remission of all penalties, does not mean "all" in the strict sense, but only those imposed by himself.
21. Hence those who preach indulgences are in error when they say that a man is absolved and saved from every penalty by the pope's indulgences.
22. Indeed, he cannot remit to souls in purgatory any penalty which canon law declares should be suffered in the present life.
23. If plenary remission could be granted to anyone at all, it would be only in the cases of the most perfect, i.e. to very few.
24. It must therefore be the case that the major part of the people are deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of relief from penalty.
25. The same power as the pope exercises in general over purgatory is exercised in particular by every single bishop in his bishopric and priest in his parish.
26. The pope does excellently when he grants remission to the souls in purgatory on account of intercessions made on their behalf, and not by the power of the keys (which he cannot exercise for them).

27. There is no divine authority for preaching that the soul flies out of purgatory immediately after the money clinks in the bottom of the chest.
28. It is certainly possible that when the money clinks in the bottom of the chest avarice and greed increase; but when the Church offers intercession, all depends in the will of God.
29. Who knows whether all souls in purgatory wish to be redeemed in view of what is said of St. Severinus and St. Pascal? (Note: Paschal I, pope 817-24. The legend is that he and Severinus were willing to endure the pains of purgatory for the benefit of the faithful).
30. No one is sure of the reality of his own contrition, much less of receiving plenary forgiveness.
31. One who bona fide buys indulgence is a rare as a bona fide penitent man, i.e. very rare indeed.
32. All those who believe themselves certain of their own salvation by means of letters of indulgence, will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.
33. We should be most carefully on our guard against those who say that the papal indulgences are an inestimable divine gift, and that a man is reconciled to God by them.
34. For the grace conveyed by these indulgences relates simply to the penalties of the sacramental "satisfactions" decreed merely by man.
35. It is not in accordance with Christian doctrines to preach and teach that those who buy off souls, or purchase confessional licenses, have no need to repent of their own sins.
36. Any Christian whatsoever, who is truly repentant, enjoys plenary remission from penalty and guilt, and this is given him without letters of indulgence.
37. Any true Christian whatsoever, living or dead, participates in all the benefits of Christ and the Church; and this participation is granted to him by God without letters of indulgence.
38. Yet the pope's remission and dispensation are in no way to be despised, for, as already said, they proclaim the divine remission.
39. It is very difficult, even for the most learned theologians, to extol to the people the great bounty contained in the indulgences, while, at the same time, praising contrition as a virtue.
40. A truly contrite sinner seeks out, and loves to pay, the penalties of his sins; whereas the very multitude of indulgences dulls men's consciences, and tends to make them hate the penalties.
41. Papal indulgences should only be preached with caution, lest people gain a wrong understanding, and think that they are preferable to other good works: those of love.
42. Christians should be taught that the pope does not at all intend that the purchase of indulgences should be understood as at all comparable with the works of mercy.

43. Christians should be taught that one who gives to the poor, or lends to the needy, does a better action than if he purchases indulgences.
44. Because, by works of love, love grows and a man becomes a better man; whereas, by indulgences, he does not become a better man, but only escapes certain penalties.
45. Christians should be taught that he who sees a needy person, but passes him by although he gives money for indulgences, gains no benefit from the pope's pardon, but only incurs the wrath of God.
46. Christians should be taught that, unless they have more than they need, they are bound to retain what is only necessary for the upkeep of their home, and should in no way squander it on indulgences.
47. Christians should be taught that they purchase indulgences voluntarily, and are not under obligation to do so.
48. Christians should be taught that, in granting indulgences, the pope has more need, and more desire, for devout prayer on his own behalf than for ready money.
49. Christians should be taught that the pope's indulgences are useful only if one does not rely on them, but most harmful if one loses the fear of God through them.
50. Christians should be taught that, if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence-preachers, he would rather the church of St. Peter were reduced to ashes than be built with the skin, flesh, and bones of the sheep.
51. Christians should be taught that the pope would be willing, as he ought if necessity should arise, to sell the church of St. Peter, and give, too, his own money to many of those from whom the pardon-merchants conjure money.
52. It is vain to rely on salvation by letters of indulgence, even if the commissary, or indeed the pope himself, were to pledge his own soul for their validity.
53. Those are enemies of Christ and the pope who forbid the word of God to be preached at all in some churches, in order that indulgences may be preached in others.
54. The word of God suffers injury if, in the same sermon, an equal or longer time is devoted to indulgences than to that word.
55. The pope cannot help taking the view that if indulgences (very small matters) are celebrated by one bell, one pageant, or one ceremony, the gospel (a very great matter) should be preached to the accompaniment of a hundred bells, a hundred processions, a hundred ceremonies.
56. The treasures of the Church, out of which the pope dispenses indulgences, are not sufficiently spoken of or known among the people of Christ.
57. That these treasures are not temporal are clear from the fact that many of the merchants do not grant them freely, but only collect them.
58. Nor are they the merits of Christ and the saints, because, even apart from the pope, these merits are always working grace in the inner man, and working the cross, death, and hell in the outer man.

59. St. Laurence said that the poor were the treasures of the Church, but he used the term in accordance with the custom of his own time.
60. We do not speak rashly in saying that the treasures of the Church are the keys of the Church, and are bestowed by the merits of Christ.
61. For it is clear that the power of the pope suffices, by itself, for the remission of penalties and reserved cases.
62. The true treasure of the Church is the Holy gospel of the glory and the grace of God.
63. It is right to regard this treasure as most odious, for it makes the first to be the last.
64. On the other hand, the treasure of indulgences is most acceptable, for it makes the last to be the first.
65. Therefore the treasures of the gospel are nets which, in former times, they used to fish for men of wealth.
66. The treasures of the indulgences are the nets which to-day they use to fish for the wealth of men.
67. The indulgences, which the merchants extol as the greatest of favours, are seen to be, in fact, a favourite means for money-getting.
68. Nevertheless, they are not to be compared with the grace of God and the compassion shown in the Cross.
69. Bishops and curates, in duty bound, must receive the commissaries of the papal indulgences with all reverence.
70. But they are under a much greater obligation to watch closely and attend carefully lest these men preach their own fancies instead of what the pope commissioned.
71. Let him be anathema and accursed who denies the apostolic character of the indulgences.
72. On the other hand, let him be blessed who is on his guard against the wantonness and license of the pardon-merchant's words.
73. In the same way, the pope rightly excommunicates those who make any plans to the detriment of the trade in indulgences.
74. It is much more in keeping with his views to excommunicate those who use the pretext of indulgences to plot anything to the detriment of holy love and truth.
75. It is foolish to think that papal indulgences have so much power that they can absolve a man even if he has done the impossible and violated the mother of God.
76. We assert the contrary, and say that the pope's pardons are not able to remove the least venial of sins as far as their guilt is concerned.
77. When it is said that not even St. Peter, if he were now pope, could grant a greater grace, it is blasphemy against St. Peter and the pope.
78. We assert the contrary, and say that he, and any pope whatever, possesses greater graces, viz., the gospel, spiritual powers, gifts of healing, etc., as is declared in I Corinthians 12 [:28].

79. It is blasphemy to say that the insignia of the cross with the papal arms are of equal value to the cross on which Christ died.
80. The bishops, curates, and theologians, who permit assertions of that kind to be made to the people without let or hindrance, will have to answer for it.
81. This unbridled preaching of indulgences makes it difficult for learned men to guard the respect due to the pope against false accusations, or at least from the keen criticisms of the laity.
82. They ask, e.g.: Why does not the pope liberate everyone from purgatory for the sake of love (a most holy thing) and because of the supreme necessity of their souls? This would be morally the best of all reasons. Meanwhile he redeems innumerable souls for money, a most perishable thing, with which to build St. Peter's church, a very minor purpose.
83. Again: Why should funeral and anniversary masses for the dead continue to be said? And why does not the pope repay, or permit to be repaid, the benefactions instituted for these purposes, since it is wrong to pray for those souls who are now redeemed?
84. Again: Surely this is a new sort of compassion, on the part of God and the pope, when an impious man, an enemy of God, is allowed to pay money to redeem a devout soul, a friend of God; while yet that devout and beloved soul is not allowed to be redeemed without payment, for love's sake, and just because of its need of redemption.
85. Again: Why are the penitential canon laws, which in fact, if not in practice, have long been obsolete and dead in themselves,—why are they, to-day, still used in imposing fines in money, through the granting of indulgences, as if all the penitential canons were fully operative?
86. Again: since the pope's income to-day is larger than that of the wealthiest of wealthy men, why does he not build this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of indigent believers?
87. Again: What does the pope remit or dispense to people who, by their perfect repentance, have a right to plenary remission or dispensation?
88. Again: Surely a greater good could be done to the Church if the pope were to bestow these remissions and dispensations, not once, as now, but a hundred times a day, for the benefit of any believer whatever.
89. What the pope seeks by indulgences is not money, but rather the salvation of souls; why then does he suspend the letters and indulgences formerly conceded, and still as efficacious as ever?
90. These questions are serious matters of conscience to the laity. To suppress them by force alone, and not to refute them by giving reasons, is to expose the Church and the pope to the ridicule of their enemies, and to make Christian people unhappy.
91. If therefore, indulgences were preached in accordance with the spirit and mind of the pope, all these difficulties would be easily overcome, and indeed, cease to exist.

92. Away, then, with those prophets who say to Christ's people, "Peace, peace," where in there is no peace.
93. Hail, hail to all those prophets who say to Christ's people, "The cross, the cross," where there is no cross.
94. Christians should be exhorted to be zealous to follow Christ, their Head, through penalties, deaths, and hells.
95. And let them thus be more confident of entering heaven through many tribulations rather than through a false assurance of peace.

Appendix H: Decree from the Council of Trent Banning the Abuse of Indulgences

Decree Concerning Indulgences

Since the power of granting indulgences was conferred by Christ on the Church, and she has even in the earliest times made use of that power divinely given to her, the holy council teaches and commands that the use of indulgences, most salutary to the Christian people and approved by the authority of the holy councils, is to be retained in the Church, and it condemns with anathema those who assert that they are useless or deny that there is in the Church the power of granting them. In granting them, however, it desires that in accordance with the ancient and approved custom in the Church moderation be observed, lest by too great facility ecclesiastical discipline be weakened. But desiring that the abuses which have become connected with them, and by reason of which this excellent name of indulgences is blasphemed by the heretics, be amended and corrected, it ordains in a general way by the present decree that all evil traffic in them, which has been a most prolific source of abuses among the Christian people, be absolutely abolished. Other abuses, however, of this kind which have sprung from superstition, ignorance, irreverence, or from whatever other source, since by reason of the manifold corruptions in places and provinces where they are committed, they cannot conveniently be prohibited individually, it commands all bishops diligently to make note of, each in his own church, and report them in the next provincial synod, so that after having been examined by the other bishops also they may forthwith be referred to the supreme Roman pontiff, by whose authority and prudence that may be ordained which is expedient for the universal Church; that thus the gift of holy indulgences may be dispensed to all the faithful piously, holily, and without corruption.¹

¹ Rev. H.J. Schroeder, O.P., *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* [Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers], 253.

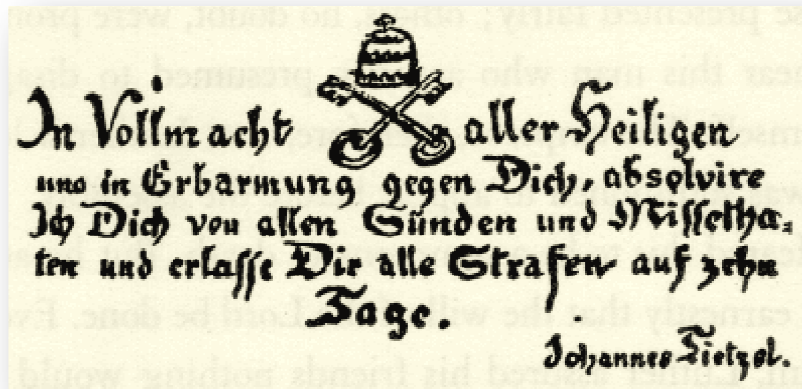
Appendix I: Chronology of Works at St. Peter's Basilica¹

1447-1455	Pope Nicholas V, the first humanist pope of the Renaissance
1448	Irreparable state of the old St Peter's basilica recognized
1450	Leon Battista Alberti began work on the sanctuary of the old basilica
ca. 1474	Erection of a new ciborium over the papal altar of St Peter
1503	Bramante hired to build a new St Peter's basilica
Apr. 18, 1506	Pope Julius II lays the first stone of the new basilica under the St. Veronica pier.
1508-1512	Michelangelo paints the Sistine Chapel
1510-1511	Raphael paints The School of Athens, offering an idea of what Bramante's church might look like.
1513-21	Pope Leo X
1513	Leo X recalls Giuliano da Sangallo from Florence to become Bramante's partner
1513-1516	Leonardo da Vinci lives in Rome at the service of Leo X
1514	Raphael and Fra Giovanni Giocondo are appointed architects forming a triumvirate
1514	Death of Donato Bramante
Aug. 1, 1514	Pope Leo's brief to Raphael in which he wrote, 'At his [Bramante's] death he justly opined that to you might be confided the building commenced by him'
Nov 22, 1516	Antonio da Sangallo is appointed coadjutor
1519	The demolition of the Constantinian portico was completed
1520	Death of Raphael
1522-1523	Pope Adrian VI
1523-1534	Pope Clement VII
1527	The Sack of Rome, at the orders of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Most of the building records to date for the new basilica are destroyed.
1534-1549	Pope Paul III
1538	Sangallo raises a dividing wall across the nave of the old basilica
1544-1546	Sangallo works on the inner ring of piers on the transepts
1546	Death of Sangallo
1546	Giulio Romano is invited to become architect, but dies before his employers release him.
1546	Michelangelo, aged 71, is named architect of St. Peter's.
1547	Michelangelo produces his first wooden model of St. Peter's, and writes to Florence for measurements of Brunelleschi's dome.
1550-1555	Pope Julius III

¹ The detailed information in this chronology is largely from the book, **'St. Peter's' by Aurelio Amendola**, text by Bruno Contardi, ©1998

- 1554** Michelangelo, writing to Vasari, says that it is his duty to see the work on St. Peter's through, come what may; and that, were he to throw it up, he would be committing a very grievous sin.
- 1555** Michelangelo, in a letter to Bartolomeo Ammannati, writes that Bramante had been as gifted an architect as any since the times of the ancients. His plan for St Peter's was concise, straightforward, luminous and beautiful.
- 1555** Pope Marcellus II, died less than one month after his election
- 1555-1559** Pope Paul IV
- 1558-1561** Michelangelo makes a wooden half section of the dome and drum, which survives.
- 1559-1565** Pope Pius V
- Feb 18, 1564** Death of Michelangelo

Appendix J: Sample Images of Indulgence Bulls



etzel's indulgence

